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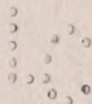
SHE GAVE A QUICK, GRATEFUL SOB

CAPTAIN LUCY IN THE HOME SECTOR

BY
ALINE HAVARD

Author of

CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE
CAPTAIN LUCY AND LIEUTENANT BOB
CAPTAIN LUCY'S FLYING ACE



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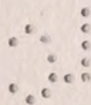
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Captain Lucy in the Home Sector



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Introduction

IF the young people who read this last story of Lucy Gordon's army life are disappointed that the end of the war does not bring her home to America they cannot possibly be as disappointed as she herself. She hoped that the war had really finished with the armistice but, like lots of us, she found that there was a great deal left to do that she had not counted upon. Peace was slow in coming, and the American army overseas had its hands as full trying to hasten it as all America on this side had, and still has, in trying to get back to peace-time ways.

The tangle of affairs in war-swept Europe is more than Lucy can understand, though she sees a little of that great unrest, and catches a glimpse of its hidden dangers, even in the Home Sector.

She does what she can to help, generously, and, though peace is not come and America is still distant, she and Bob and all the Gordon family find happiness together, and look forward with brave confidence to the glorious future of the dear country to which they will before long be homeward bound.

ALINE HAVARD.

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Captain Lucy in the Home Sector

Captain Lucy in the Home Sector

CHAPTER I

ALONG THE RHINE

THE Home Sector,—that was what Larry Eaton called it, a little irony beneath his irrepressible cheerfulness, when he had been ordered to Coblenz with the American Army of Occupation. He had called it so with his eyes on the Stars and Stripes already floating over the general's headquarters in the old German city, and after a side-long glance at Lucy Gordon's sober face. "It's the first step on the way home, Lucy," he said, as the two walked along the grassy banks of the river, the pale December sunlight shining on the water and, at their left, on the low houses at the outskirts of Coblenz. "Don't look so downhearted, old pal."

Lucy smiled and shook off her depression. It was hard ever to be gloomy for long in Larry's company. The young aviator had something in-

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vincibly gay and hopeful in his nature, and a philosophic acceptance of things, until they could be bettered, that often quieted Lucy's rebellious moments. "I'm not downhearted, Larry," she protested. "At least not very. But I did want to go home,—not after a while, you know, but right away, when the armistice was signed. I know it's wonderful to be at peace, and to have Father safe and stationed here, but,—I don't care very much about living in Germany."

"Don't you?" asked Larry, laughing. "As Beattie would say, you're jolly right."

"And there's no use thinking we'll all be together," Lucy persisted. "Even though Father has his quarters here and Mother will finish her work and come, where will Bob be?"

"Scouting over the Bolshevik lines in the frozen north," said Larry, a tinge of envy in his voice. "I'd change with him if I could."

"Would you? Oh, Larry, I should think you'd had enough."

"So we have, but so long as there's fighting to be done I'd rather be there than cooling my heels along the Rhine. And our men aren't having an easy time,—that poor little force at Archangel."

"Oh, I know there's lots of work to do!" Lucy exclaimed, suddenly roused from her childish depression, and involuntarily she opened the

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woolen cape she wore and glanced at her nurse's aide's uniform. "I'll stop growling and try to help."

"I don't think you'll have much trouble doing it," said Larry, smiling down at her, "judging by what you've done so far. Only this time you'll have an easier job of it,—no prisoners to set free. You can't imagine a peacefuller spot than that little hospital you're going to. It's lost in the forest, and even the village near it looks half asleep and as though it might tumble any minute down the hillside."

"The peacefuller it is the better I'll like it," said Lucy with something of a sigh. "I've had enough of war."

Although General Gordon was stationed with the Fifth Army Headquarters in Coblenz, where already, a month after the armistice, American troops had taken possession of houses in the German city and were preparing for their long stay in the occupied territory, Lucy herself was still on duty elsewhere. With the end of the fighting, need for war workers of all sorts had not grown less. Mrs. Gordon could not yet leave her hospital at Cannes, and Lucy had been urged to keep on as nurse's aide with an insistence that could not but fill her with honest pride and satisfaction. The army surgeons spoke to her of the increasing

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need of nurses among the convalescents, and Miss Pearse frankly begged Lucy not to abandon her.

“You can go to Coblenz in the spring, Lucy dear,” the young nurse persuaded, when new plans and changes of base occupied every mind in the joyful week after the armistice. “We have to garrison Coblenz for fifteen years, they say, so your father will probably be there a good while. But perhaps he won’t,” she added, smiling at Lucy’s face, grown disconsolate at her words. “Anyway, while you’re over here I know you’d sooner be helping. There’s almost more to do than ever. The men have been rather let down by the war’s end and all the delays following. They don’t know what to do with themselves, especially the wounded who are slow in getting well. We’ve got to give them a Christmas that will stifle their homesickness a little. And I can’t half work without you, Lucy. I’m so used to having my little aide to call on. You’ll stay, won’t you?”

This was not the sort of persuasion Lucy could resist, when her heart was already in the work that she had learned in such a hard school of suffering and anxiety. She eagerly consented to follow Miss Pearse wherever her father would allow her to go, which ended by being a little convalescent hospital outside the village of Badheim, ten miles west of Coblenz on the banks of the Moselle. Cold breezes

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from the two rivers swept it, and the air was pure and sweet with the odor of pine. After the shell-torn villages of France, Badheim hospital, as Miss Pearse described it, seemed lovely and inviting to Lucy in its woodland stillness. Yet something, she felt, would keep her from yielding to its peaceful spell: it was a part of Germany. It was unspoiled because France was desolate. She could not forget this long enough to look about her at any German landscape with untroubled eyes.

Even now, walking with Larry along the Rhine, she watched the smooth flow of the river and looked across at the vineyard-clad slopes and at the great old fortress towering opposite Coblenz with coolly critical gaze. All at once she turned to Larry, with sudden recollection that this was her last day of freedom and perhaps her last chance in weeks of talking with Bob's friend, to ask longingly:

"Larry, can't you tell me anything more of what Bob is doing at Archangel? He doesn't write much about his work, and the letters are so slow. I know it's hard up there. And they don't get ahead. The Bolsheviki are strong."

"Our force is hardly of a size to accomplish much. It ought to be enough men or none," declared Larry, with the troubled, puzzled look that sometimes came over his face, making him look extraordinarily sober and thoughtful by contrast with

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his usual cool cheerfulness. "But don't worry too much about Bob," he added, putting aside the doubts which had made him speak so earnestly. "He's doing scouting work. He's far safer than he was on the German front. The cold is the disagreeable part."

"I know. I've knitted him everything I thought he could pile on. He doesn't say much about it, but I looked up Archangel on the map and, Larry, it's near the North Pole."

"Not quite, but I won't say it's a pleasant climate. Perhaps they won't stay there much longer."

"Well, I thought on Armistice Day that it was over, really over,—the war, I mean. But here it seems to be tailing out in every direction."

"Yes, it has rather a nasty way of refusing to be finished," Larry agreed, looking around him as he spoke at the passers-by, for they were now re-entering the town. "To judge by their manner these Boches seem to think it's quite over and that we're friends again. Yet some of them, I'm sure, are very far from feeling that way."

"What do you really think?" asked Lucy curiously. "They smile at us and are eager to sell things. But Larry, how can they feel friendly?"

"I can't fathom them," said Larry, not much given to analyzing character at any time. "Most

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of them seem spiritless enough, but I've seen a few bitter looks, all the same, and some eyes that shone with hate at sight of us. I don't trust one of them."

"Oh, they'll have to take it out in hating us," said Lucy easily. "They can't do any worse now."

Lucy had had enough of plotting and conspiracy. She was determined to put German treachery out of her mind and live in confident simplicity once more.

"Fed-up with the war, eh, Lucy?" Captain Beattie had remarked, when Lucy and the young Britisher met by chance in Cantigny soon after the armistice. "Well, you know, I rather am myself. Let's cross the Channel and leave it all behind."

And that was what Lucy longed to do, putting the Atlantic in place of the Channel, in spite of trying to persuade herself of the contrary after Miss Pearse's urging. All through the war she had looked forward to that day, the fighting ended, that would see the Gordon family on board the first ship bound for America. Even adventurous spirits have their homesick moments. Foreign sights and sounds had, while this mood lasted, lost their charm for her. She looked around her now at the old gabled houses of Coblenz, at the Germans passing, who paused to stare with blank curiosity at the Americans, already a familiar part of the city's in-

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habitants, and she felt no sympathy with her surroundings.

"I'm going to bury myself in that forest and work so hard at the hospital that I'll forget I'm in Germany," she told Larry, as they neared the house commandeered for General Gordon's quarters. "You might come out and see me once in a while, though, Larry, and tell me how peace is getting on."

"I'll be out every year or two and bring you the news," Larry promised. "Maybe I'll feel the need of a little rest cure myself. I'm pretty well exhausted."

Lucy laughed as she met the blue twinkling eyes above his tanned cheeks. An orderly opened the house door as Larry held out his hand in good-bye.

The following day Lucy joined Miss Pearse and half a dozen other Red Cross workers to travel by motor-lorry to Badheim. The road ran along the Moselle, a lovely woodland countryside which went far toward bringing back Lucy's lost serenity.

"I love the country, don't you, Miss Pearse?" she said, breathing deep breaths of the piney air. "I should think sick men would get well quickly here."

"I hope they will," the young nurse responded. "But I'm sure they'd get well quicker if these

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woods were in Maine or in Michigan,—anywhere at home.”

Her voice betrayed her and Lucy looked at her friend with a quick thrill of sympathy. Miss Pearse was as homesick as she herself, in spite of her stoic calm. And, meeting the glance of an orderly who sat on a case of supplies in one corner of the lorry, Lucy read the same longing in his eyes even before he exclaimed almost involuntarily, “Or not even woods or rivers, Miss. Just the docks at Hoboken would look good enough to me.”

The little village of Badheim was perched upon a hillside, the road winding at its foot. The lorry turned sharply away from the Moselle to begin a long climb up a heavily wooded slope. The forest now closed in on both sides,—majestic oaks, mixed with pines and hemlocks which sang and murmured as the river breeze swept over them. Rabbits darted across the road and squirrels chattered in the overhanging branches. All at once the hospital appeared, a big frame building in a clearing near the top of the hill, its roof in spreading gables, like a Swiss chalet, and the Stars and Stripes floating over it.

Behind it were half a dozen cottages for the staff. The whole had a weather-beaten look, for it had stood there more than fifty years, and an air of solitude enveloped it, as though it were much

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further removed from town and village than it really was. Lucy decided in one glance that it needed sunlight and cheerful voices to keep from being a gloomy spot where the murmur of the swaying pines would change to sighs of loneliness.

In fact the convalescent soldiers seated on the verandas or strolling over the grassy clearing and in the borders of the woodland looked sober and purposeless, their idle steps leading vaguely from one spot to the other, without any spur of hopeful energy. Lucy understood at last Miss Pearse's eloquent persuasions, and seeing how sorely help was needed here, she forgot her own repinings and was herself again.

Miss Pearse and Lucy installed themselves in a room in one of the cottages beside the hospital,—a sort of shed built of heavy unpainted planks, with sloping roof and leaded window-panes. A stove fed with pine-boughs warmed the drafty interior somewhat from the December cold.

While the two newcomers were unpacking and settling themselves in their narrow quarters the hospital's head nurse came in and talked to them, dropping down on the nearest chair to do so; for she was tired and glad of a moment's rest.

"You will think there is terrible confusion here, for we are all at loose ends," she told them. "We haven't enough nurses nor orderlies, and nothing is

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in smooth running order. I hope you won't mind, for a few weeks, not having a regular routine but doing whatever presents itself."

"That will just suit me," remarked Lucy, brushing her corn-colored hair before the little mirror. "Send me on all the errands you can think of, Miss Webster."

The head nurse laughed, looking kindly at Lucy's pretty face, lighted by the smile that her unaffectedness made very attractive. "I'll find plenty for you to do, don't worry," she said confidently. "When nothing else turns up, go about among the convalescents and talk to them of home."

"Are there bad cases here? What sort, mostly?" Miss Pearse asked.

"Some are men who have been gassed and their lungs are injured. Those are the discouraged ones who think they can never get well. Then we have a good many with broken limbs slowly mending, and some recovering from pneumonia and trench fever. There are about eighty in all, and most of them getting on splendidly, if they would only forget their homesickness and that they must spend Christmas in Germany."

"U-um, but it's not so easy to forget that," murmured Lucy, understandingly. "And, though of course this hospital has fine air and all that, it's not

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a very cheerful place, do you think? With all these German woods shutting it in?"

"German woods are just like any other woods, Lucy," said Miss Pearse laughing. "Don't be making trouble. We're ready now, Miss Webster."

The hospital wards were nearly empty for a part of the day, during which almost all the patients got up and sat on the verandas, or were wheeled about if they could not walk. Lucy was surprised to see a good number of French soldiers scattered among the Americans, and looking a good deal more cheerful than her own countrymen, as though they knew that their return home could not be much longer postponed.

Miss Webster explained to her: "These Frenchmen were in need of special treatment—we have mineral baths here. Or else they were in American hospitals and were brought along with other convalescents. They will almost all go before Christmas."

Lucy was put to work in the diet kitchen, which she left at lunch time to carry trays to those of the convalescents whose capricious appetites needed special encouragement. The trays were numbered and so were the chairs in which the invalids reclined, but as Lucy, carrying a tray holding chicken broth and biscuits and numbered forty-five,

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approached the chair bearing that number, the occupant got up and, walking slowly down the veranda steps, strolled off toward the edge of the clearing.

The man was a French officer, a blond of tall and powerful build, though now his blue uniform hung loosely on his shrunken frame and his slow steps were a trifle uncertain. Lucy put down the tray and ran after him, calling out, "*Quarante-cinq! Quarante-cinq!*" Then as she neared him and saw the insignia on his uniform she changed her form of address to, "*Monsieur le capitaine! Attendez, s'il vous plait?*"

The Frenchman turned around and seeing Lucy pointing with expressive gesture to the veranda where the soup was cooling on the deserted chair he smiled and took off his cap, saying with quick apology, "*Pardon, Mademoiselle.*" Then changing into good English he continued, "I am sorry to have made you follow me. Thank you very much."

Lucy walked beside him in silence, stealing glances at his face in puzzled amazement. Where had she seen that face before? It was not really familiar, yet she knew beyond a doubt that she had seen the man and spoken to him and, more than that, at a moment of great fear and anxiety. Almost a shiver caught her now at the dim remembrance. Where had it been?

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“You have just arrived here, Mademoiselle?” the officer inquired, turning pleasantly toward her.

All at once Lucy knew. She saw in her mind's eye the de la Tours' little house in Château-Plessis, the German soldier entering the dining-room and Michelle's cry of joy and terror.

“Captain de la Tour!” she exclaimed in vivid recollection, and as the officer looked at her in surprise she went eagerly on, “You don't remember me? Of course not—how could you? I'm Michelle's friend, Lucy Gordon. I was in your mother's house when you came into Château-Plessis as a spy. For a moment I couldn't remember. Oh, tell me, how is Michelle?”

The Frenchman looked at her closely, his blue eyes shining with pleasure. “I remember you now, Mademoiselle! And that day—will I ever forget it! I am happy to see you, my sister's very dear friend.” He held out his hand as he spoke—a thin, bony hand from which fever had taken the strength and firmness. “Can you stay a moment? I will give you good news of Michelle.”

“A moment, yes. But don't let your soup get cold,” said Lucy, handing him the little tray as he sank down on his chair again, breathing hard. “And your mother—is she well, too?”

“Not very well, but nevertheless she thinks more of her absent son than of her own health. I am not

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able to go home, they say, and *Maman* fears I shall be lonely at this season, in spite of my kind American friends. She and Michelle are coming to Badheim for the Noël."

At this Lucy was struck so speechless with delight there was a pause before she could put into words her joyful amazement. "Coming here? Oh, Captain de la Tour, isn't it good news? I can't tell you—you can't guess how glad I am!"

Lucy's hazel eyes sparkled with the words and her whole face lighted up. Perhaps never until that moment had she realized the place Michelle held in her heart. Now at this lucky chance to review in peace and security the friendship woven among such sad and peril-haunted days she felt a thrill of happiness that raised her spirits almost to their old-time level.

Captain de la Tour watched her with quick sympathy, his pale lips touched for an instant by the brief, radiant smile which could so strikingly change both his and Michelle's faces from their thoughtful gravity. Lucy longed to ask all about her friend, of whom she had caught so short a glimpse on the eleventh of November, but she had not another moment to spare. "When will they come?" she lingered to ask.

"This week, I think. I am waiting every day to

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hear," said Captain de la Tour, his voice filled with eager hope. "I have not seen them since the war ended. I was shot through the lungs the day of the armistice."

When the luncheon hour was over Miss Pearse said to Lucy, "This is a good chance to do what Miss Webster asked me to find time for. She wants us to go with the orderlies to the spring in the forest and see to the bottling of the water. It won't take long."

Lucy was thinking so much about all she would have to tell Michelle that she hardly noticed what Miss Pearse said, but followed her in obedient silence across the clearing behind the hospital and into the woodland. In front of them went two Hospital Corps men drawing hand-carts filled with empty bottles.

There was no snow yet on the ground and, beneath the trees, it was carpeted with moss and pine needles so that footsteps were hushed and the sigh of the branches overhead made so deep and steady a murmur that the forest seemed all at once to have an atmosphere of its own. A great peace pervaded it so that even the soldiers spoke involuntarily in low tones, and glanced about them with a kind of solemnity at the tall trunks of the firs and hemlocks, with here and there an oak spreading its wide, bare branches. The sunlight shone down

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with a golden gleam into the dim greenness of forest aisles stretching endlessly on every side.

Lucy walked on in enchanted silence. She thought she had never known anything more lovely than this murmurous stillness, the soft carpet beneath her feet, the great evergreen trees closing in around her and the cold, pine-laden air against her face. The mysterious scamper of shy woodland bird and beast delighted her. She would not have guessed that they had gone a hundred yards when, after half a mile's walk, they came out suddenly into another big clearing, near the center of which stood a little cottage built of unplanned logs, its roof covered with pine boughs and smoke rising from its earthen chimney.

"It looks like a fairy story," said Lucy softly, remembering Elizabeth's old forest tales.

The soldiers led the way along the clearing's edge for a hundred yards and then reëntered the forest. Almost at once the sound of water tumbling over stones broke the stillness and a little spring came into view, a bubbling basin with moss-lined, rocky bottom, and beside it a tiny rustic shed, its door fastened with a rusty padlock.

"That little shed held the bottling machine the Germans used," Miss Pearse explained to Lucy as the men began to unload their carts, "but it got out of order toward the end of the war, so for a few

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weeks we shall have to bottle by hand. We are supposed to supervise but it's quicker work if we help."

All four knelt down on the mossy earth and began dipping up the spring water with ladles and pouring it through funnels into the big water-bottles. The spring bubbled up unceasingly, so crystal clear that no disturbance of the water could keep the rocky bottom from showing always in trembling outline.

"This is a mineral spring," said Miss Pearse, setting aside a filled bottle which looked empty in its clearness. "The water is as wonderful as this forest air. Hello, who's this?"

A little girl five or six years old had crept silently up to the spring and was standing with big blue eyes fixed on the Americans. Her flaxen braids hung over her faded print dress, a ragged red shawl was clutched about her and her feet were thrust into clumsy sabots above which her stockings were slipping down. An uncertain smile that began to dimple her pink cheeks broadened as she met Lucy's friendly eyes.

"*Guten tag,*" she murmured shyly.

And "*Guten tag,*" repeated a man's voice as the fir branches were brushed aside. A big German, close to middle age, blond and deeply sunburned, ax in hand, stood behind the child, his keen eyes

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fixed on the workers, a touch of sourness about his lips, though he spoke pleasantly enough.

Lucy looked up at him and the enchantment of the great old forest, of the bubbling spring and the soft-footed little girl vanished in that one glance. She was back again in Germany.

CHAPTER II

FRANZ AND HIS FAMILY

CHRISTMAS, 1918, and peace on the Western Front. That was the thought in everyone's mind at the little Badheim hospital—that for the first time since 1914 the guns were silent on Christmas Day. But Lucy's happiness was not what she had hoped for, though she seemed as gay as the others as she helped decorate the bare hospital halls with evergreen forest boughs, dark against the bright background of Allied flags. Michelle guessed her secret longing, nevertheless, with the quick sympathy which made the French girl so readily understand the joys and sorrows of those she loved.

"It is not the same for you as for me—this Noël," she said to Lucy as they worked together to make the long tables cheerful for the homesick soldiers' eyes, "for you have not your brother back."

"It isn't only that I miss him, Michelle," exclaimed Lucy, glad to put her troubled thoughts into words for Michelle's friendly ear, "it's that he's still in danger. They say he is only scouting over the Bolshevik lines, but you know what that

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means. The enemy is there—I can't help worrying."

"I know you cannot," agreed Michelle, without offering useless consolation. "It is very hard. I thought *Maman* and I were of all the most unlucky when Armand was shot on the day of *l'armistice*, but now he is almost well and we have no more to fear."

So much and so deeply had Michelle lived and suffered in the past four years that she did not even think to bewail the loss of home and fortune that the war had brought. The Germans were defeated and her mother and Armand spared. That seemed just now the granting of all she had to wish for.

Lucy had found herself more than once watching her friend's face in the few days since Michelle and her mother arrived at Badheim. On Armistice Day she had realized that Michelle could not respond to the joyful news with any abandon of light-heartedness. The bitter suffering of the long years of war had made the little French girl grow up before her time. Even now, with her blackest cares behind her, with hope and confidence in the future, Michelle's lovely face was still serious in repose, and her dark blue eyes held a lingering sad watchfulness that did not suit her sixteen years. Only now and then, when the two friends ran into

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the forest to collect the fir boughs, when Michelle's black hair was loosened about her neck and her radiant smile chased away all memories from the happy present, did Lucy catch a glimpse of that careless gayety which the war had stolen from her.

In spite of Lucy's troubled thoughts of Bob she found unlimited pleasure and consolation in Michelle's company. Together the two worked as they had worked in the old days at Château-Plessis, to brighten the wounded men's gloom. Only now they were among friends, with no sharp-eyed German surgeons on the watch. This thought somehow made Lucy almost resigned to being in Germany.

"We have to be here, instead of at home, but at any rate we can do what we please. It's we who give the orders now," she said to Michelle the morning of Christmas Day. A German farmer from beyond Badheim village was unloading supplies from his cart beside the hospital steps, and some of the convalescents with awakening interest were gathered around.

"Yes, the German trees can't take us prisoner," said Michelle with whimsical gravity, looking up at the great sighing pines closing in around them. "They are lovely—these forest trees. It was not the Germans, but God who planted them."

Lucy felt again a touch of the enchantment that

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had caught her the first day she had entered the forest stillness. But at thought of the cottage in the clearing—now familiar ground—the face of the German woodcutter came before her once more to spoil the beauty. And yet there was nothing about the man, silent or quietly civil with the hospital workers, to make so definite an impression on her mind. She spoke her thoughts aloud.

“I can never see that Franz without remembering all the hatefulness of every German I’ve known in the past two years. While he’s about I can’t forget I am in Germany.”

“He does not forget it either,” was Michelle’s reply.

“Oh, I don’t think he bears us any grudge, Miss. He’s pleasant enough when we walk to the spring or the clearing,” remarked a young convalescent soldier sitting on the steps. “He’s old and soured by a hard life. Poor, too, to judge by the rags the kids wear.”

Michelle looked up at the soldier’s face, a boyish one, with pale cheeks rounding out with returning health and frank, merry gray eyes.

“Franz has not forgiven,” she said again. “Don’t you see he has not?”

The young soldier did not much care one way or the other. “Maybe you’re right,” he agreed peaceably. “We’re going to have *some* dinner,” he

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added, following with his eyes the packages being carried toward the kitchen. "Gee, it's great to be hungry again."

Christmas dinner was more of a success than anyone had hoped for. The convalescents could not help responding to such kind efforts, and in doing so they forgot their homesickness and began to appreciate their real good-fortune. Then, returning strength gave a good share of them hearty appetites, which found a reasonable number of German or American good things for their satisfaction. And the bright flags, the soft green of the fir branches, and the red berries which Lucy and Michelle had searched for in the forest, made the dining-room and tables gay and almost home-like to the young Americans gathered there. Some were still in wheeled chairs, with hollow cheeks and no interest in the food before them, but even these cheered up a little as talk and laughter grew louder, as songs of home were sung and toasts offered with cheers or laughter.

Larry Eaton was there, at Lucy's invitation, and he, Madame de la Tour, Armand, Michelle and Lucy sat together at one end of a table. Larry was in wonderful spirits, or else he tried with all his kind heart to make Lucy forget Bob's absence. Madame de la Tour, in the midst of the noisy, crowded roomful, said little. Her eyes were upon

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her son as he smiled and talked and tried to coax his feeble appetite for her pleasure.

All at once it seemed to Lucy that the Christmas gayety had more of the pathetic than the merry about it, and that the toasts drunk were bantering and would-be light-hearted ones, because reminders of home brought some of those weak, white-faced convalescents close to tears.

After it was all over and the men scattered, some wheeled away to rest after too much excitement, Lucy, Michelle, Armand and Larry walked into the forest, where the sinking sun had begun to send its slanting beams.

"I'd like to come here to get well," remarked Larry, sniffing the piney air. As he spoke a cold wind, rising with the approach of sunset, swept through the trees and made the girls draw their capes closer. Larry added thoughtfully, "I mean I'd like it here now—the war over and all. It's not a place to come to as a German prisoner. Rather spooky, if you were inclined to be down on your luck."

"Do you find it that way too, Larry?" cried Lucy, delighted to hear her own thoughts put into words. "I've felt that so often about this forest in the two weeks I've been here. Have you ever read silly books where, when the hero feels desperate about anything, a thunder-storm comes up to

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give him a background? Well, this forest never changes, yet however I feel, it makes me feel more so."

"Say it once more, please," said Larry grinning, while Armand turned amused eyes on Lucy's serious face.

"I can't say it properly," she protested, flushing a little. "I mean that the forest makes me feel everything more deeply. If I'm happy when I come into it, it looks beautiful and I am twice as happy, but if I come here anxious, not having had a word from Bob in days, it's gloomy and unfriendly, so that I don't stay any longer than I must."

"I understand very well," said Michelle in her pretty, quiet voice. "It is that here, beneath the trees, one can think very clearly, and when the thoughts are sad ones ——"

"You'd rather they were interrupted," put in Larry, pulling off bits of pine-bark to throw at two squirrels chattering on a limb overhead. "Seems to me we're getting dismal for Christmas Day. Whose idea was this, anyway, to make a call on the Boches?"

"Michelle's and mine," said Lucy. "We promised Franz' children some fruit and candy. Poor things, they have hardly anything. Franz is awfully poor, or else he is a perfect pig."

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"The children—they look cold, Captain Eaton," added Michelle. "Do you know if all the peasants around Coblenz are very poor?"

"Some are. Of course many suffered in the war, though nothing in comparison to the French. But there's a real scarcity of food and clothing here now."

"They have plenty of wood to burn," said Lucy. "But when the children run out-of-doors they shiver in those rags they wear."

"The *maman* looks sad and hopeless. She seems not at all to care," remarked Michelle wonderingly.

"The father is your special friend, isn't he, Lucy?" asked Larry, his eyes twinkling.

"Yes, he's my favorite," she agreed, refusing to be teased. "He makes me think of the good old days last year in Château-Plessis."

"Truly, he is not a *joli type*," said Armand. "There is something hard about his eyes and smile."

"Does he act sulky with the hospital staff?" asked Larry.

"Oh, no," said Lucy. "He supplies us with wood. Probably he can't help looking the way he does. He's just German."

"This must be the son and heir," said Larry.

A little boy, just able to run alone, with a yellow

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thatch of hair above his eager face, and arms outstretched to help his stumbling feet, burst through the trees and made for Lucy, panting, "*Guten abend, Fräulein! Fröhliche Weihnacht!*"

"Merry Christmas yourself, *mein Herr*," Larry responded, stooping to pick up the little German as he tripped and fell over a root in his excitement. "Better look where you're going."

"Hurt yourself, Freidrich?" asked Lucy in German, while Michelle brushed pine-needles from the child's hair.

"*Nein*," he answered, still panting, and, rising on tiptoe, tried to peep into the basket that Larry carried, not quite daring to approach the young officer, though burning curiosity was fast overcoming his fear.

The next moment two more children came running from the clearing, the little girl whom Lucy had first seen at the spring, and a boy about a year older than Freidrich. All three wore torn cotton clothing over which ragged coats or shawls were held together by their cold, bare fingers. Their flaxen heads were uncovered and their stockings slipped down over wooden shoes.

"*Ça m'étonne*," said Michelle, shaking her head. "The German peasants are very careful with their children, as I remember them."

"Perhaps they can't get clothes," suggested

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Larry. "Wool is terribly high now in Germany. They are rather nice-looking kids."

"Yes, a little above the peasant class," remarked Armand, patting the shoulder of the four-year-old boy, Freidrich's brother, who walked beside the French officer, casting eager, curious glances up at him. "What is your name, little one?" he asked in German.

The child hung his head in silence, but the little girl, her bright eyes turned for a moment from the basket, the center of all their hopes, answered promptly:

"His name is Wilhelm, Herr Officer, and my name is Adelheid. And our father's name is Franz Kraft. I am seven years old."

She ended with a smile and a bobbing curtsey. Larry said, in a peculiar German something like Bob's, "Thank you, my little maiden." He was about to ask her if the cottage which now appeared in sight was her home, but his German failing him, he asked it instead of Lucy in English, remarking, "He must do quite a business—this Franz. He has enough wood cut already to last the hospital all winter."

The woodcutter had heaped his fagots in neat piles over about one-half of the clearing, which covered perhaps two acres.

"He has men come to help him cut," Lucy ex-

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plained. "They cart the wood away to towns and villages near here. He's quite a well-known character, to judge by the visitors he has. If he's popular, I don't care for German taste."

"Now, Fräulein? Can we see now?" begged Adelheid, dancing up and down in her impatience.

"Yes, right now," consented Lucy, sitting down on a pine stump in front of the cottage and taking the basket from Larry.

As she uncovered it a gasp of delight rose from three little throats, and Lucy felt Freidrich's and Wilhelm's panting breaths against her face, as they bent toward her in irresistible excitement.

"*Pauvres petits*," murmured Michelle, touching Adelheid's thin little shoulder.

There was nothing in the basket but fruit and Red Cross candy, with some bits of tinsel saved from the tree that had ornamented the ward where the men lay who were too sick to attend the Christmas dinner. But as Lucy distributed the basket's contents the children's cheeks flushed pink and their eyes shone as they stammered, "*Danke, gnädige Fräulein, danke.*"

A step sounded on the threshold and Adelheid held up her full hands to cry joyfully, "Look, Papachen, look!"

Franz' big, lean frame filled the doorway, his face heated from woodland labors. With a soiled

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red handkerchief he began, at sight of his visitors, to brush bark and dirt from his shabby clothing. His expression was somewhat grim as he glanced at the foreigners; but at the children's insistence, after one quick, frowning contraction of his heavy brows, his sour lips curved in something like a smile. He stroked Adelheid's head, having made the visitors before his threshold an awkward bow, and, to their astonishment, addressed them in French—German French, remarkable in sound and accent:

"Ponjour, Messieurs et Mestemoiselles. Merci beaucoup. Foulez-vous entrer tans ma bauvre maison?"

Michelle was the first to decipher this utterance. She smiled faintly and shook her head. "We came only to see the children," she explained, also in French.

Franz' keen eyes had left her face to scrutinize the two officers who stood behind her, though as soon as their glance met his he shifted his gaze to the children and summoned his difficult smile once more.

"Let's go," said Lucy, looking up from where she sat holding Freidrich, and trying to persuade him not to cram all his candy into his mouth at once.

Footsteps sounded again inside the cottage and a woman appeared behind Franz, and, peering out

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over his shoulder, nodded to Lucy with a smile as cheerless as her husband's, but tired and spiritless rather than sullen. She was young, but sad and anxious looking. Her light brown hair was twisted up anyhow on her head, and the sleeves of her faded calico were rolled above her elbows.

"Thank you, kind Fräulein," she said, amiably enough. "The little ones are grateful. Good-day to your young friend, and to each Herr Officer."

With this greeting she shuffled back into the cottage, without a word to her husband, who was staring at the ground now, forgetting his attempts at civility.

"Good-afternoon," said Lucy, getting up, still holding little Freidrich's hand. The others nodded to the German as they turned back toward the forest, the children tagging at their heels.

"We will walk a little way with you, shall we?" asked Adelheid, dancing ahead. She had stuck the bits of tinsel that fell to her share into her flaxen braids, and looked, as she flitted about among the great tree-trunks, like a child come to life out of a German fairy tale.

"Have you lived here always, Adelheid?" asked Larry, smiling at her.

Adelheid's bright eyes fixed his as for a second she puzzled over his bad German; then, under-

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standing, she said quickly, "Oh, no, Herr Officer. But we have lived here a good while. Let me think. Well, I can't remember, but we came here when there was fighting. Papachen left off being a soldier to bring us here. He said it was better so—then he need not fight any more. But our mother was not pleased."

"Need not fight any more because he became a woodcutter?" asked Larry doubtfully.

"I don't know, *mein Herr*. That was what he said. He was sad and the mother was sad. We were poor, because we had no longer the farm."

"You used to have a farm?"

"Yes—a fine one, with pigs and a field. But the fighting came, and they took all that place."

"Who took it?" Larry persisted.

Adelheid glanced shyly at Armand's face, then, almost whispering, explained to Larry, "It was the French. They said it all belonged to them. They let us stay where we were, but soon there was a battle and everyone had to run away."

"What was the place called?" asked Michelle with sudden understanding.

"It was the Reichsland, Fräulein," said Adelheid, proud of her attentive audience. "They sometimes talked French there."

"Alsace-Lorraine!" exclaimed Armand.

"That's where he learned French," said Larry.

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"I thought it was strange in a German peasant."

"He is not a peasant," insisted Armand. "He is just what the child says—a farmer. When the fighting in Alsace-Lorraine commenced his land was ruined, and he was too much leagued with the Germans to face the French occupation."

"But I wonder why the Boches let him leave the army," Larry pondered. "Was your father wounded, Adelheid?" he asked.

"No, *mein Herr*, I don't remember it."

"Adelheid!" Through the forest stillness Franz' voice sounded harshly. "*Komm hier schnell, Adelheid!*"

"*Ja, ja!*" responded the little girl, shouting. With a skip, she seized her brothers by the hand, and, turning for a smiling farewell and a "come soon again," ran back toward the clearing, the little boys stumbling along at her side.

"Perhaps Papachen suspected that we were hearing the family history," surmised Larry, watching the children disappear among the firs. "If he has any secrets to hide he had better keep Adelheid locked up."

"Isn't she a cunning little girl?" said Lucy. "I wish they weren't Germans. I don't know what is the matter with their mother. I suppose she's poor and worried."

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"Probably she's thinking of the farm they lost," said Larry. Then, putting Franz and his family out of his mind as they began mounting the slope which showed the approach of the hospital clearing, "Can't you get a holiday and come to Coblenz, Lucy? I'm lonely without you or Bob. I'm losing my morale."

All three of the others laughed at his gloomy voice, and Larry remarked with smouldering resentment, "It's always that way when I get the blues. I'm laughed at. I'm considered a light-hearted soldier, and if I'm anything else I get no sympathy."

"Yes you do, Larry—plenty from me," Lucy protested. "But, you see, I count on you a lot myself, so I have to laugh at the idea of your getting low in your mind, or I'd feel twice as lost as I do alone."

"Is that plain to you, Captain Eaton?" asked Armand, amused, and Larry, smiling in spite of himself, said more cheerfully:

"That's a real Lucy explanation. Well, I'll have to carry on in the Home Sector and play up to my part."

"Other people have had to," said Lucy, glancing at Michelle. She could not yet look into her friend's face without remembering with a warm thrill of admiration the almost hopeless days of

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captivity when Michelle's splendid courage and cheerfulness had spurred her to equal fortitude. "I'm afraid I don't quite stand on my own legs when trouble comes," she added, with some irrelevance for those who could not follow her thoughts. "I always need someone to keep me going."

"I don't know. You've stood up pretty well, I think," said Larry, more eager in her defense than in his own. "For instance, the time you ——"

"Escaped from Château-Plessis," broke in Michelle, with equal enthusiasm. "There was not anyone to push you to the lines of the *Alliés*, or to shut the Germans' eyes."

"And how about the night you flew with me into Germany?" persisted Larry. "I didn't encourage you then, that's sure."

"I don't mean all that," Lucy interposed, flushing warmly at having provoked this unexpected praise. "Anyone can be brave once in a while. With me it's more desperation than courage. If ever you hear that I've done anything you think took nerve, you may know I did it because something else frightened me still more."

"You can't take your motives to pieces that way," objected Larry, never good at argument. "You were brave, and that's all there was to it."

"But the sort of bravery that I admire," Lucy continued earnestly, "is the sort that lasts. I was

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more hopeless after five weeks at Château-Plessis than Michelle after four years. I couldn't have endured what she did."

"Oh, perhaps I saw fear and sorrow so often in those years I came to know well their faces and did not mind them," said Michelle, trying to speak lightly. "My courage was not very great—a prisoner has the same." She slipped her hand through Lucy's arm as she spoke. "Do not think I did not sometimes borrow strength from you, *mon amie*."

"Both kinds of courage are needed," said Armand, thoughtfully. "It took both to win the war."

"You ought to know," said Lucy to herself, smiling as she looked up at the Frenchman's thin face, above his wasted frame. She thought of the times he had risked inglorious death as a spy in his country's service.

"We have a visitor," said Michelle, as they left the forest and began to ascend the clearing behind the hospital.

She pointed to a gray army motor-car standing in the road. At the same moment Larry exclaimed, "It's General Gordon's car. Your father has come, Lucy."

"Yes, he promised to, as soon as the Christmas celebrations were over in Coblenz." Lucy quick-

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ened her pace and in a minute saw her father coming down the veranda steps to meet her.

"Merry Christmas, Father! I'm so glad to see you!" she cried, hugging him. "You don't look very gay," she added, searching his face with her clear eyes. "Father, are you homesick, too?"

"I'm all right, little daughter," replied General Gordon, smiling, though his face did not relax into its usual calm confidence.

"Come and see Michelle and her brother?" Lucy urged. Her eyes held a sudden anxiety which she tried to put from her as she made the introductions and listened to her father's pleasant talk with her friends.

Armand was looking tired and in a moment Michelle led him away to rest. General Gordon, Lucy and Larry walked over to the cottage and sat down in one corner of the bare little parlor.

Almost at once Lucy put the question trembling on her lips. "Father, there's something wrong! Please tell me?"

"I'm sorry—on Christmas Day," began General Gordon reluctantly. Then at Lucy's frightened eyes he added quickly, "It's not so very bad, Lucy. They say he's all right. Greyson telegraphed me to-day from Archangel. Bob had a fall in his plane and has broken his leg. Greyson

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assures me there is no danger. He will send word again to-morrow."

Lucy's cheeks flamed with the desperate effort to keep back her tears. Her heart was pounding in her throat and she dared not try to speak. But in spite of herself the tears overflowed her eyes and glistened on her lashes when she heard Larry's troubled voice beside her and felt her father catch her hand in his warm, firm clasp. She gave a quick, grateful sob.

"*You* know how we feel, Larry," she said, looking up at him as she winked away her tears.

CHAPTER III

SCOUTING ON THE DWINA

“TWENTY below zero,” said Bob, as he brushed the icicles from the thermometer outside the door of his shack, “and it’s the twenty-third of December. How low does it fall, I wonder, Denby?”

“Don’t know, sir,” answered the corporal gloomily. “I never look at the temperature—I can feel it all right. But Pavlo, here, told me this wasn’t very cold for them.”

Bob closed the door and turned to look at the Russian peasant who was on his knees beside the stove, stoking it with small pieces of wood.

“He seems to keep warm enough, yet he hasn’t as thick clothes on as we,” he remarked, studying Pavlo’s hunched-up figure, in sheepskin jacket and round fur cap.

“No, sir, but he stays on level ground,” said Denby. “I don’t believe there’s anything would keep out the wind up there.” He jerked his head toward the sky, picked up fur helmet, gloves and goggles and handed them to his captain.

“I shan’t want you to go up with me to-day,

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Denby," Bob told him. "I'll take a single-seater and scout along the river."

Bob wore a heavy fur flying-suit, leather lined. His helmet covered all of head and face not protected by his goggles. Over his boots would be drawn a second pair, made of skins sewn together with the fur left on. Yet he faced the Arctic winter day reluctantly. Bob had always hated extreme cold, even in his boyhood days at home, and two years of the mild French climate had completely spoiled him for ice and blizzards. And the Archangel winter came near to being what up to now he had only known of in books of Polar exploration, read before a blazing fire:—a wilderness of snow and ice, and a thermometer that dropped steadily lower every day, until the freezing misty air penetrated through any number of layers of clothing to the very bone.

It was not only this, however, which made Bob linger at the doorway of his shack instead of starting off to his afternoon's work with his usual alacrity. He felt no enthusiasm for the present campaign. It seemed to him a miserable mistake, a gloomy anticlimax to the war's glorious ending. Russia ought not to be an enemy, but an ally. The spectre of Bolshevism, stalking so boldly abroad upon these frozen plains, rose up to cloud the joy he had known for a few weeks after the great victory.

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More than this, he knew at heart with the soldier's clear-seeing mind, that the American and British lives to be pitifully lost on the snow-fields of Archangel could not stem the tide of Bolshevism, which, if it were to be fought at all, needed a mighty effort to crush its maddened onslaught. Bob's thoughts of all this were vague and undefined as he pulled on his gloves and left the shack with Denby beside him. But they were persistent enough to take the edge off his energy, and to change the ardent eagerness of past months to a dogged, but low-spirited, determination to do his duty.

From a big flying-shed a hundred yards away an aviator was coming toward him, running stiffly over the snow to start the blood in his cramped limbs. A second flying-shed stood near the first, with a small barrack and half a dozen shacks beside it. A snowy road wound past them across the plain to the town of Archangel two miles away. The noon sky was cloudy and threatening, hiding the winter sun from the cold earth. A single plane droned overhead, flying northeast.

"Beastly weather, Gordon, I'll say. Got a good fire in the shack?" called out the aviator who now approached him, clapping his numbed hands together.

"Yes—I wish I could take it with me," re-

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sponded Bob. "What news, Turner? Anything I should know?"

"I got one sketch of their new trench line, but it's not very satisfactory. Continue scouting along the river, will you? That's Morton you see up there. He's going north. By the way, the Bolshies are getting some planes rigged up—pretty good ones. Look out for them. I almost ran into one in these everlasting clouds. So long."

He ran on toward the shack, while Bob and Denby continued to the flying-shed, where the mechanics, at sight of Denby in overcoat instead of flying clothes, began to roll out a little Nieuport monoplane on to the smooth-packed snow.

"Going up alone, sir?" concluded one of the soldiers, saluting Bob as he put the question.

"Yes," he nodded, beginning to look over the airplane before him with the intentness of the man who knows that he must trust his life to those frail wings. Denby followed Bob's eyes, and neither officer nor corporal seemed overpleased with their inspection, though Bob said only:

"No news of the Nieuports we expected this week, Rogers? Did you make inquiries at the port yesterday?"

"Yes, sir—they've received nothing there. But I've gone well over this one. It flew well, you said, sir, the last time you were up."

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“ Oh, yes. Nothing to complain of. Let's have the boots, Denby.”

The corporal slipped the fur leg-coverings over Bob's feet, and, when the aviator was seated in the little plane, fastened the straps across his body. Then, unwilling that the others should take his place, he ran to twirl the propeller. The Nieuport ran along the snow and rose into the dull, cold air.

Bob pointed upward, making for a level above the first low-lying belt of clouds. The motor was running smoothly. Bob told himself that he was growing cranky, and that he must cease regretting the Spy-Hawk and make the best of things. But telling himself so did not do much good. He wanted the airplane of his choice to fly in, as a good horseman wants his own racer, tried and proved on many a turf. On the Western Front Bob had had his pick of French and American planes—the famous ace was welcome to all or any. But here at this outpost of the Russian wilderness the supply of airplanes so far was meagre. He had to fly in whatever he could get hold of; and often, against his grain, was obliged to scout in battle-planes, or risk flights under heavy fire in light scouting craft.

Now he was above some of the shifting clouds, and, flying slowly, he looked down upon the river Dwina, its broad stream choked with blocks of ice, between which the deep blue water gleamed. In

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spite of the clouds and mist a glorious panorama lay spread below him as, hovering for a moment before commencing his eastward flight, he made a careful survey with his glasses in every direction.

He was almost over the river, facing northeast. On his left lay the town of Archangel, its roofs snow-buried. West of it was the ice-bound Gulf of Archangel, and, beyond that, the wide frozen expanse of the White Sea. In front of him stretched the endless plains that fronted the Arctic Ocean. On his right, far up the river, he caught a glimpse of the town of Kholmogory.

There was something inexpressibly dreary and abandoned about the scene. The very names were barbaric and meaningless on his lips. "Petrograd seems almost near home," he thought, "now that I'm six hundred miles north of it."

He turned east and began following the course of the Dwina to where, around a little village nestling by its banks, he could see American troops in squads and companies moving here and there, and motor-trucks painfully nosing their way along a snow-blocked road. A trench-line was faintly visible, east and west of the river. Not a shot disturbed the silence, in which the roar of his airplane's motor was the only sound.

Bob flew on eastward, approaching the Bolshevik lines. The enemy was strongly entrenched,

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with artillery behind him, but at the first snow-falls the fighting had grown intermittent. Bursts of firing and short, hard-fought engagements alternated with days of inactivity on both sides. As he flew over the trenches now anti-aircraft guns were trained on him and shots came near enough to make him rise another hundred feet.

For the second time in two days Bob remarked with surprise the presence of a growing purpose and organization among his adversaries. The Bolsheviks seemed to be abandoning their somewhat hit-or-miss methods for a better ordered scheme. Ordered by whom? Bob had heard rumors of Russian officers of the old army forced into Bolshevism to train Trotsky's Red troops.

He flew on behind the trenches, risking a lower level in his desire to see the new lines of communication, unsurveyed up to now by the tiny handful of American and British aviators around Archangel. For a few moments he dodged back and forth in quick tacks to throw the gunners off their aim. Then, leaning out over the cockpit, with his glasses he studied the narrow lines showing dark against the snow-fields. In five minutes the deadly fire of the anti-aircraft guns forced him to rise again above the clouds. He rapidly sketched in on his field map what he had seen, ready to try another descent.

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The icy air penetrating his lungs made him gasp a little. The air seemed to have substance, body, as though he were in the grip of a block of ice. It got past the ear-tabs of his helmet and made his ears tingle. His feet were numb through leather and fur. In the dull cheerlessness of his mood a profound depression began to steal over him, but at the same time half-unconsciously he fought against it, and some forgotten lines came into his mind with all the vividness of words learned in childhood. He found himself silently repeating them:

“Say not the struggle naught availeth,
The labor and the wounds are vain ——”

He went on saying over the fine solemn words as he swung the Nieuport down again through the fog:

“—It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e’en now the flyers
And, but for you, possess the field.”

He was hardly at the last line when a Fokker bi-plane broke through the clouds in front of him.

The enemy plane had not risen in pursuit of the American. Its guns were not trained on the Nieuport. In that fleeting glimpse Bob saw that the Fokker’s gunner, glasses raised, was observing his own lines below, while the pilot manœuvred the

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plane over rifts in the cloudy floor. But at sight of the Nieuport the gunner flashed his weapons into range, though no shots followed, for at once the drifting clouds hid the two antagonists from each other.

All his slumbering energies aroused, Bob leaned forward with keenest intentness, trying to see through the treacherous misty curtain. He glanced at his machine-guns, made sure that his motor was running smooth, and rose a little higher, hoping to get above the Fokker and avoid surprise.

He thought swiftly as he prepared for attack, still puzzled by the enemy plane's appearance. It was a German machine—no doubt about that. He supposed the Bolsheviki had bought or stolen it. Vague suspicions, already aroused during the past few days, stirred him once more, but again he rejected them.

"I think he's a German because inwardly I'm longing to bring down another German plane," he told himself.

He tried to picture the faces and figures of the men in the Fokker, as they had flashed close beside him, but they were like himself unrecognizable in fur and helmet. Five minutes passed before the Fokker again appeared, this time greeting the Nieuport with a broadside that sent bullets whizzing past Bob's ears to cut into the fog behind him.

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Bob rose again, filled with ardor, and determined, more than ever in the presence of this menacing intruder, to accomplish what he had come out for and get the rest of his sketch of the new Bolshevik lines. He climbed at high speed, darted about until he saw the Fokker cruising through the clouds below, then plunged down above it and delivered a hail of bullets on its broad spreading wings.

As he dodged and rose again he watched the enemy sway and nose-dive into a cloud-bank. He noticed that the wings were bare of emblems. The German crosses—if they had been there—were gone. The Fokker recovered and rose again, the fabric of its upper planes slashed by the Nieuport's bullets.

Bob was uncertain what tactics to follow. So far he could not be sure whether his adversary was sly or stupid. The Fokker's pilot seemed to have little initiative, yet he manoeuvred the heavy plane skillfully. It dipped and climbed almost at the little Nieuport's speed. Unless the pilot were a clumsy Bolshevik amateur Bob could never hope to disable the Fokker from his own light craft. The best he could hope was to scare him off or lose him in the clouds.

Suddenly all doubt of the enemy's skill vanished, for the Fokker headed straight for the Nieuport

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and, firing repeatedly with well-aimed volleys, circled about the little monoplane, which turned tail and retreated up into the sky, where the heavy Fokker could but slowly follow.

At 9,000 feet Bob paused, for the enemy had stopped rising 1,000 feet below him and seemed to be awaiting developments. Bob was too high for convenient observation and the drifting clouds annoyingly obscured his vision. He peered down at the Bolshevik lines, nevertheless, keeping one eye on his enemy, who was all but in range and waiting inexorably. After ten minutes' more sketching, by frequent change of position and some clever guesswork, he had got most of the information he wanted. Now he began to cast uneasy glances toward the Fokker which flew back and forth on the watch, just above the clouds.

Bob had never been good at a waiting game, and this cat-like proceeding got on his nerves. He began to feel trapped, and in consequence defiant. He reloaded both guns, speeded up his motor, and without warning dropped like a plummet over the cruising Fokker and emptied both guns over cockpit and rudder.

This done, however, he was obliged to fly still lower before he could attempt a climbing turn. The Fokker, though bullet-riddled and one plane sagging, followed him down, spraying the little Nieu-

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port with a deadly fire. Bob realized now his own rashness in not fleeing at once before an enemy who so outmatched him. The truth was he had not been able to convince himself that any Bolshevik flyer could outmatch him, even in a battle-plane twice the Nieuport's size.

He hid in the clouds, looking with anxious misgiving at his torn wings and suddenly aware that his rudder did not obey him with exactness. Once more the Fokker passed him, slowly this time, for to Bob's tremendous relief, he saw that the enemy plane was badly crippled and had lost some of its speed. In the same breadth of time he saw at last the pilot's face. Hidden by helmet and goggles, he recognized the shape of that big chin, the turn of the head, the stoop of the broad shoulders. He had seen that man a thousand times over the battle-fields of France,—Rittermann, one of the last of Germany's veteran flyers.

Bob turned the Nieuport westward, put on what speed he could and ran away at eighty miles an hour. He steered for his own station, east of Archangel, following the river which wound below him, the water gleaming darkly through the ice in the approaching twilight. But the Nieuport's rudder did not obey his touch. The monoplane veered northward, slackened speed. Bob looked back, his mind whirling a little, then drew a long hard breath.

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The Fokker had lost him. He was within the American lines again, but north of the Dwina, above a rough, ice-covered plain cut into hummocks and ridges, broken just beneath him by the bare branches of a wood.

He wanted badly to land but saw no possible landing-place in sight, and the familiar home field was far away. He turned with difficulty and began flying back toward the American trenches, seeking the village by the river where the companies of infantry were billeted. But in the past half hour the early Arctic night had begun to fall. By his wrist-watch it was quarter to three, and he knew that by three o'clock it would be almost dark. The cold was so intense it numbed his power to think, and his rudder, struck by the Fokker's bullets, responded more feebly every moment.

He flew on eastward, crossed the river below the clouds, and began searching the banks for the village, looking for its lights, for now a glimmering dusk spread over the desolate landscape. In another five minutes the lights shone out,—a dozen tiny twinkling points about two miles ahead of him. He pushed on, hoping against hope to cover that short space, but a few moments more convinced him of the worst. His heart sank like lead as his desperate eyes watched the gleaming white snow-fields below him.

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"The first time in all these years," he thought miserably. "My Spy-Hawk would have held on ———"

The Nieuport's wings sagged lower. Its rudder no longer obeyed Bob's frenzied pressure. For the first time since that day in 1917 when he and Benton had come down in German territory to be taken prisoners, Bob—an ace and the hero of many victories—was forced to land at night on unknown ground in an airplane that shook and quivered under him as it flew crookedly downward, the Fokker's bullets too much for its imperfect frame.

A forced landing in the dark—a moment before Bob had thought that bad enough. But now, as the Nieuport quickened the plunge which he was helpless to arrest, he realized that truth with a thrill of terror. The motor missed, choked, stopped running. In the silence that succeeded the propeller's roar the wind whistled past the wings as the plane fell. Bob looked down at the white-shining earth below, his heart leaping in his throat, his head whirling as the blood rushed to his temples. The snow rose with a dizzy swiftness to meet him. The plane struck, nose down, with a shock that hurled him through the air. He fell onto the hard surface, one leg doubled under him, from which such darts of agony shot through him that with a groan he lost consciousness.

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When he came slowly to himself, forced back to life by the stabbing pain in his right leg, Bob opened his eyes on darkness, felt the icy night wind sweep past him and sharp, cold particles pressing against his outspread hands. He rolled over on his back, not without a groan at the renewed torment of his leg, and stared up at the sky, where, between the flying clouds, scattered stars shone with cold brilliance. He felt hard lumps like stones sticking into his back, but he could think clearly enough now to know that the lumps were hardened snow, and that the deadly chill penetrating him through fur and leather garments would but too soon be followed by numbness and yielding to a sleep from which he would never wake.

Painfully raising his head he could see the faint lights of the village, not a mile away. Could he freeze to death within sight of help,—within a few miles of his own flying-field? A desperate determination roused him to fight against the agony of his broken leg and do what lay in his power to save his life. Life was, all at once, inexpressibly dear to him. Spent with pain and cold as he was, the blood flowed warm in his veins and resolution conquered his weakness. But already cold had so far overpowered his brain that his mind was at moments clouded, and it was then that the coward part of him bade him lie down and forget the hor-

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rible pain that every movement cost him, and sink into oblivion.

The airplane was not a dozen feet away. He could see its dark blot against the snow, and the outline of its broken wings. If he could climb upon its frame, he thought, away from the snow that was freezing him, he might summon force enough to keep alive till daylight. Daylight on the White Sea! It was not more than six o'clock in the evening now, and dawn would not break before eight o'clock of the following day. He knew that Turner and Denby would soon be out searching for him, but by what lucky chance would they stumble upon him? They had more than fifty miles to cover—a wide expanse, even with airplane search-lights.

He took his lip between his teeth as he turned over again on his face and began crawling toward the Nieuport. He panted as he dragged himself along, for he could do no more than bend his left leg and catch at the snow with his gloved hands. The uneven snow-crust striking his right leg and jarring the broken bones hurt so atrociously that after two yards he stopped dead and, laying his face on the snow, in pain and despair almost lost consciousness once more. But something in him still resisted—something dogged and heroic that had made him the flyer he was—that had led him to

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Sergeant Cameron's prison. He raised his head and crawled on again, reached the Nieuport and, finding one of its wings lying almost flat along the ground, managed to drag himself upon it and lay there gasping and dizzy.

The wing was almost on the snow and its torn fabric not much protection from the icy surface. Still there was a difference, and the fact of having accomplished his purpose made Bob more able to keep up the struggle. After a moment he tried to shout, but one hoarse, shaky cry told him the uselessness of wasting his little force. The whistling night wind snatched his feeble voice away before it had travelled over the smallest part of the great spaces around him. He looked up at the airplane's wings and thought with sudden inspiration that he might set them afire as a signal. He was actually feeling inside his furs for his matches before it occurred to his dazed mind that the gasoline would ignite with the plane and that, helpless as he was, he would never get away in time.

At this quenched hope he was horribly cast down. Despair threatened again to overwhelm him. Nevertheless he went on dully scheming. After a few minutes of aimlessly wandering thoughts another idea came to him, and this time his heart gave a faint leap, almost of hope. He braced himself to endure the agony of movement,



HE WAVED THE FLAMING STREAMERS ABOUT HIS HEAD

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squirmed around until he could reach into the airplane's cockpit and, after a painful search, closed his fingers on a pair of pliers.

He slipped off the sagging wing on to the snow again, lay there a moment breathing hard, for every effort made his strained heart race and hammer, then began cutting the wire of the wing and ripping away the fabric. Presently he held some wide strips of silk and a long piece of wire. He fastened the silk in streamers at the end of the wire and, taking the wire between his teeth, crawled away from the plane. A dozen yards distant human nature could endure no more and he lay back on the snow, feeling nothing but the throbs of agony that darted from his broken leg into every part of his body.

Yet in a minute he sat up, planted the wire in the snow and, drawing out his matches, managed, after several trials in the gusty wind, to set the silk on fire. He caught hold of the wire now, and, heedless of pain, lifted himself as much as he could and waved the flaming streamers about his head until the blaze shrank down to sparks and went out, leaving him with false flashes of light before his eyes in the darkness.

Bob did not know just what happened after that. He lay down again and tried to steel himself once more to endure the pain, to stay awake, and to go

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on hoping. But the effort to keep repeating these resolves was too terrific. He felt that he was attempting problems utterly beyond his power, and every now and then he would rouse himself with a start and realize that he had been very near dreaming.

The stars shone more thickly now overhead. He tried to count them, lost track, began again. He could hardly remember where he was. He was not nearly so cold as before—he was almost comfortable. He seemed to have no feeling at all in his body, except for his leg which still throbbed dully. All at once, through the numbing of his senses, he was dimly aware of a sound in the snow near him, a kind of crackling, steadily repeated. Some lingering sense of reality made him suddenly realize that the sound was of footsteps approaching him, or at least passing near. As he roused all his remaining energy in a desperate attempt to cry out the footsteps ceased, and from beside the demolished plane a voice shouted:

“Ah, there! Speak if you can! Where are you?”

Bob made some sort of sound—he did not quite know what. But it was enough to bring the footsteps close beside him. A figure loomed above him in the darkness, an electric torch flashed over his prostrate form, and, as the man knelt by Bob's side,

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the light showed the uniform of a British tommy, a muffler-wrapped throat and a lean red face, with breath puffing white into the freezing air.

"Came down, eh? It was you what waved the signal?" he inquired, his keen eyes wandering over Bob. "'Ow much are you hurt? Can you walk, me 'elpin' you?"

"No, I can't walk. You'll have to fetch help," said Bob, still struggling to cling to reality. One-half of him was gloriously happy at this deliverance, but the other half wanted to forget and go to sleep and could hardly tell the soldier what to do. "Go to Nikolsk, that village where you see the lights," he continued. "Americans are billeted there. Ask them to send a detail of Hospital Corps men with an ambulance. Make sure of where I am. Have you a compass?"

"But can you stick it? I'll be gone an hour," said the tommy doubtfully. Bob's voice was scarcely more than a whisper, and there was a pause between his words when his thoughts failed him.

"I'll stick it. Make it as quick as you can," he answered.

The Britisher still lingered. Bob heard him murmur something which sounded like, "Well, looks like it's got to be done." The next moment Bob heard a garment of some sort flung down and

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spread out on the snow beside him, and felt himself lifted cautiously by the shoulders and dragged, before he could protest at the handling, on to something like a blanket. "Carry on now. I'll keep my feet movin'," said the tommy, and with the words he ran off into the darkness.

Bob felt with his hands of the fabric spread under him, touched a cloth sleeve and knew that he was lying on the soldier's overcoat. A faint thrill at this generous act touched his dulled senses. But he no longer felt the cold and did not care whether he lay on snow or blankets. He had a feeling now that all was settled. At moments he even thought that he had got back to his station and was in bed. At any rate he knew that he had not to think or plan any more. He fell asleep.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SILLY ASS

THE hours Bob next lived through were a sort of waking dream. He had moments when he knew well enough that he was being lifted by careful hands into an ambulance which then began to glide on sledge runners over the frozen plain. He felt blankets wrapped about him and, with the first returning warmth, his leg began to stab him again with throbs of anguish. But these half-lucid minutes were followed by long intervals of dreaming that took him hundreds of miles away from the snowy plains, to days that came back to him vaguely now as part of another life.

At last, after a very long time—days or weeks, he could not tell which—he opened his eyes and looked around him with fairly untroubled brain. He was in a room in a Russian house, for a porcelain stove occupied a good part of it. Outside the low window he saw the everlasting snow, some trees, their bare branches swaying in the keen wind, and, in a moment, a soldier walking rapidly toward shelter.

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Inside the room, at the foot of his cot, was a small hospital table, with gauze, bandages and bottles upon it. The walls were newly white-washed, two other cots lay beyond his, and a faint smell of chloroform lingered on the air. He turned his heavy head and saw an officer seated beside him.

"Well, Bob, how is it?" inquired the surgeon, taking the patient's hand in his.

Bob stared at him, moved his tongue with an uneasy feeling that he could not speak, then murmured, still with painful effort, "You, Greyson? They brought me here—all right—then. What day is it?"

"It's Christmas Day. We brought you here night before last. You're in Nikolsk village, in our little hospital. Don't you remember what happened to you day before yesterday?"

"Yes," Bob answered slowly. The whole tragic scene reappeared before his mind in bits which he struggled to piece together. But all at once the dull ache in his leg brought it vividly back. He started from his pillows, a sudden dread darkening his eyes. "Greyson," he stammered, "my leg! You won't—you haven't——"

"We haven't and we won't," said the surgeon, smiling as he pressed Bob's shoulders back against the pillows. "Your leg is going to be all right. You're a tough specimen, Bob—I'll say that.

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Most people wouldn't have come out of it so well."

"You're telling me the truth?" Bob persisted, his muscles tense and quivering.

"On my word of honor. The fracture is set and shows every sign of healing. You have no fever."

Bob lay silent, spent with peaceful gratitude. He began again reviewing his accident, and when he reached the moment when the British tommy bent over him he roused himself to ask:

"That British soldier who brought you word—do you know who he is? I want to thank him. He gave me his coat, too. Is he all right?"

"Yes. He came here yesterday to ask for you. I tried to thank him myself, but as soon as I began he cut me short by saying, 'Never mind that, sir. It ain't a medal of honor I'm lookin' for. What I want is for you to promise not to say nothing to my captain about that there night. I was out as you might say without leave, when I happened to see that air chap's signal blazing.'"

Bob smiled faintly. "I'll stand his guardhouse sentence for him, if he gets one," he said unsteadily. "Another few minutes and I couldn't have held out." He shivered at thought of those hours of misery, drawing the blankets closer around him. "You sent word to my squadron, of course, Greyson—and to Father?"

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“Yes, to both. Turner came over yesterday. He salvaged your airplane and took your maps and sketches back to Headquarters. He said the colonel received them with enthusiasm.”

Under the glow of this satisfaction Bob forgot his regrets, the loss of his plane and his own helplessness. With vague thoughts of past Christmases flitting through his mind he sank into what was this time profound and restful sleep.

When he awoke again he was enough stronger to think clearly and without gaps in his memory. It was almost dark in the room and, outside, the snow-fields were glimmering in the twilight of early afternoon. The stove sent out a pleasant heat that Bob was still near enough to his escape from freezing to rejoice in. He thought now of the skirmish in the clouds with the Fokker biplane, and of the German pilot whom he had seen face to face. He began to long for news of the battle-front. He wondered whether the Bolsheviki's meagre air forces had been further increased. At this point in his reflections the man in the cot beside him sat up and looked at him, with deep, sad grey eyes, set in a thin, fever-worn, unshaven face.

“Good-day,” he said, speaking English with a slight lisp and great deliberation. “You are better, I hope?”

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"Yes, thanks," said Bob, studying him. The stranger's melancholy eyes and oddly vibrating voice so aroused his curiosity that almost unconsciously he asked, "Who are you, please?"

The man hesitated a second before he answered, "I am a Russian prisoner—brought wounded here."

"I see," said Bob and relapsed into silence.

His neighbor looked at him, his sad eyes gleaming as though with thoughts he did not know how or feared to put into words. After a moment he seemed to reach a decision for, pushing himself upright in bed with his thin, trembling hands, he said with a sort of jerky eagerness, "I am not a Bolshevik, *Gospodin* (sir). I am not an enemy."

"Uh?" Bob's incredulity expressed itself in something like a grunt, which he did not trouble to make more articulate. He had heard plenty of German prisoners, seeking to please their captors, make the same sort of protestations. At what he took to be cowardly fawning he lost interest in his strange neighbor.

The Russian, however, visibly excited, darted glances almost beseeching toward the American, who lay looking out of the little window in unsympathetic silence. He started to address Bob again, frowned, hesitated, then plunged into speech. He spoke fluently enough, except for an

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occasional Russian word inserted where his English failed him.

“Perhaps you think, *Gospodin* officer, that I take a liberty with you. But, consider, I have watched a young man brought back from death to life—for you were yesterday very close to death. I know the cold snow-fields. I have lain there, too. It is not strange that I speak to you—ask for your health?”

“Not a bit—of course not,” agreed Bob, suddenly pitying, in spite of himself, this thin, pain-wracked sufferer who held himself up from his pillows with an effort that sent tremors through his nervous, overwrought frame. “Why don’t you lie down?” he asked. “You’re tiring yourself for nothing.”

The Russian lay back panting, but almost at once he demanded, breathlessly, “You will let me talk to you? Not now, perhaps, but soon—to-morrow? I have watched your face while you lay there. You are one of those Americans who thinks and acts ——” He broke off, catching his breath.

Bob thought, “I wonder if he’s crazy.” Aloud he answered soothingly, “All right. Tell me anything you like. I can’t talk much yet, but I can listen.”

Before the other had time to answer the room door opened and Major Greyson, followed by the

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colonel in command at Archangel, came to Bob's bedside. Behind them an orderly brought a lamp, which he placed on the table, for darkness had fallen over the snow-fields.

"Awake, are you, Captain Gordon? And feeling—how?" asked Colonel Masefield, taking Bob's hand as he sat down by the cot. "You don't look quite yourself, but Greyson here is encouraging."

"I'm getting on all right, sir, and thank you for coming," said Bob, returning the handshake with one that was still feeble.

"I had a cable from your father, Bob," put in the surgeon. "He asked for any further news."

"Didn't make it any worse than you could help, did you?" asked Bob, hating to send bad news on Christmas Day.

"I said your leg was broken and you were suffering from shock but were not in danger," replied Major Greyson, sitting down on a chair the orderly brought forward.

"The Nieuport, Colonel—I'm sorry," said Bob.

"You've brought us down twenty-eight German planes, Captain Gordon, and this is the first of ours you've lost. I think we can overlook it," said Colonel Masefield. "Besides, that Nieuport was well sacrificed for the sketches you got. They are just what we've wanted. Adding them to Turner's

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photographs we can launch our attack on the enemy's new lines."

"An attack—a big one?" Bob asked eagerly.

"Big for our little resources. We hope to push the Bolshies back a bit. Of course our objective here is simply to keep them well east of Archangel and away from the little port of Alexandrovsk—our one way out."

"I'll miss it," said Bob drearily, trying to move his broken leg, a helpless weight in splints and plaster. "Did you find the note I scribbled on one of my sketches, Colonel? That the Fokker which chased me was piloted by Rittermann? I'd like to face him in a plane his size!"

"Yes, that was a bit of priceless information," said the colonel thoughtfully. "We've had our suspicions; though, to tell the truth, I think there is only an occasional German pilot flying with the Bolsheviki. The German government would hardly bargain with them now. They have enough anarchy at home to fear."

"By the way, Greyson," exclaimed Bob. "Why did you put me in the room with a Bolshevik?" Bob glanced at the empty cot beside him. The orderly had wheeled the Russian away for a change of scene, which consisted in another view of shimmering snow and faintly starlit sky.

"Well, as you may have noticed, Bob," said

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Major Greyson, "we haven't a great deal of room here. That chap had to have the best of care. He was as near death, two weeks ago, as anyone can be and live. We picked him up after their last retreat. Besides, he's not a Bolshevik. He's quite a decent fellow."

"What, has he told you that stuff, too?" demanded Bob. "Colonel, I think he's a first-class liar. He hardly waited until I was awake to pour into my ears that he was not a Bolshevik. He was fighting with them, wasn't he?"

"Yes, they forced him in," said Major Greyson.

"They all say that. Why didn't he refuse?"

"Oh, for several reasons." The surgeon remarked Bob's flushed face and quick breath and evaded an argument. "I think we'll go now, Colonel, if you please," he added. "My patient isn't quite the man he was yet. He's talked enough."

"Good luck, sir, with the attack," said Bob as the colonel rose. "I wish I could be there."

"You made it possible," said the colonel. "That's something."

More tired than he realized, Bob fell into a doze when he was left alone, thinking vaguely of the coming engagement in which he could have no share.

The attack, however, did not come off as the

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colonel hoped, for, by the middle of Christmas night, the few stars were hidden by the clouds which had spread over the heavens, the wind howled around the little village of Nikolsk and snow began to fall heavily. Dawn broke, about half-past eight, the feeblest, greyest glimmer of light over the snow-fields. From the sky fell such myriads of snowflakes that it made Bob dizzy to watch them. The wind drove them like white flocks in every direction, mostly, it seemed, up against the window from which the orderly beat the drifts every half hour. The icy wind penetrated the cracks and chilled the room, in spite of the big porcelain stove's unfailing heat.

Bob knew that to-day neither Allies nor enemy would think of an attack. It was as much as life was worth to venture abroad in the increasing storm. A stranger was almost certain to get lost on the snow-fields, once the curtain of falling snow had cut him off from landmarks. The never-lessening descent of the snowflakes fascinated his eyes. He lay motionless, in his listless weakness, watching them, until his neighbor the Russian roused him from his reverie with his eager, pleading voice.

"*Gospodin* American, will you listen to me? I do not wish to be an annoyance, but perhaps you will be glad to hear ——"

Bob turned toward him, curious at this insist-

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ence. The Russian lay on his pillows, looking spent and weary, his haggard face white above his unshaven cheeks, but his eyes brighter than ever in the dull grey light of the snow-storm.

“Where were you wounded?” Bob asked him.

The Russian pointed to his chest. “Here. But it is nearly well. Only it hurts sometimes to breathe. Will you listen a moment, *Gospodin* Captain?”

“Yes,” Bob nodded.

The Russian pulled himself to that edge of his cot which was nearest Bob’s and began at once, “My name is Andrei Androvsky. I live in the town of Nijny-Novgorod, which is, as your honor knows, east of Moscow. There I left my wife and two young children.”

He paused, breathless again. Bob thought with a touch of impatience, for that strained, eager voice was beginning to get on his nerves, “It’s the story of his life he wants to tell me, then. What on earth for?”

Androvsky caught his breath and continued: “I left them in 1914 to enter the Czar’s army and fight Germany.” Perhaps his clear, watchful eyes guessed something of Bob’s thoughts, for he hurried on with fewer details. “I fought under the Grand Duke and under Brusilov. I became an officer. I fought with the Republican army after

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the Czar's fall. My papers would show you this, but the Bolsheviki kept them when they forced me to serve."

"Forced you?" Bob interrupted. "What do you mean?"

"They threatened me with death and——"

"But death at their hands or death fighting like a slave in a bad cause—I think you made a poor choice," said Bob pitilessly. He was picturing himself forced to fight with the Germans against his own countrymen.

The Russian's eyes darkened with shame and sorrow. Bob's heart suddenly smote him for his hard words. But Androvsky answered unresentfully, his thin voice shaking a little:

"Yes, if life were all, I would have given it. But the Bolsheviki were going to take my house and little patrimony and turn my wife and children out-of-doors in the bitter winter. My youngest child was six months old. Could I see them starve and freeze to death?"

"I didn't think of that," Bob slowly admitted. "It was hard. What did you do?"

"I joined the Bolsheviki, stifling my conscience, trying to think only of my little ones safe and warm at home. I do not defend myself. I only tell you what is true, so that you may take my word for something else."

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"Something else?" Bob echoed.

"So that knowing that I am friendly to the Allies," Androvsky went on, "you may believe me when I tell you that the Germans are helping the Bolsheviki."

Bob's heart gave a quick throb and a vision of Rittermann's face flashed before him. But at the same time he studied his companion intently. Androvsky's tragic story was just what a clever rascal would make up to win sympathy. He thought the Russian's looks and voice better proof of his sincerity than any argument. In spite of the wariness gained in two years of hard experience Bob believed that the man meant to speak the truth. About any real German alliance with the Bolsheviki, however, he was frankly incredulous.

"I know there are some German flyers up here," he told Androvsky. "But I don't think Germany would really combine with Trotsky to attack us. The new Germany has too much anarchy to fight at home to ally itself with the Soviets now."

"You are right, *Gospodin* Captain," exclaimed the Russian, with a return of his nervous excitement. "The German government is busy suppressing outbreaks, even in Prussia itself. But the Germans who are bitterly discontented, those inclined toward Bolshevism, or even Royalists who see ruin ahead—are but too willing to join any

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power able to delay the peace or to divide the Allies. These malcontents have turned Bolsheviks for the chance of revenge. You say you have seen German officers here. I have seen German officers organizing the Bolshevik regiments and German ammunition feeding their guns."

"Won't the German government do anything?" asked Bob. "It must see that only peace will save Germany now."

"The new government is weak, and still fighting its own rebels. Besides, its leaders are divided between dread of Bolshevism and a bitter satisfaction at seeing the Allies threatened by its advance. Will you tell your friends this, *Gospodin* Captain?"

"Yes, let me think it over," Bob said. "Don't talk any more now. You'll have a relapse. I believe what you say, or that it seems the truth to you."

Androvsky nodded and closed his eyes. Bob fell once more to watching the cascades of snowflakes hurled against the pane, thinking over the Russian's words. Bob did not want to and tried not to believe him, because it meant bad news, uncertainty, the peace delayed. He felt at that moment, with sudden gloom, as Lucy had felt the day she said to Larry, "I thought the war was over. But here it seems to be tailing out in all directions."

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Before he got very far in his troubled reflections the dull report of two pistol shots fired in the snow-storm made him start up to listen.

In a minute another shot followed. It sounded about a hundred yards distant, south of the village. Almost at the same moment half a dozen dough-boys, wrapped to the ears in sheepskin jackets and woolen mufflers, ploughed past the window with rifles in their hands.

"What can it be, Androvsky?" asked Bob, tingling with the helpless longing to get up and see for himself. "Orderly! Greyson!" he called.

But the orderly, usually within easy call, did not answer, and Androvsky could only shake his head, staring at the window. A few hurried footsteps and a murmur of voices disturbed for a moment the hospital silence which then settled down again.

After twenty minutes spent in vainly straining his ears, Bob at last heard quick steps in the corridor. The door opened and the orderly entered, carrying blankets and pillows which he laid down on the empty cot beyond Androvsky's.

"What is it, Miller? What's happened?" cried Bob.

The orderly pulled the empty cot around in front of the window as he answered in fragmentary haste, "Man to be brought here, sir. Pretty well

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chilled through in the snow. Escaped from the Bolshies' lines."

He paused, hurrying to prepare the cot, for already slow steps sounded outside and two soldiers entered, carrying a stretcher on which lay a young man, bareheaded, all of his uniform but boots and breeches hidden by his snow-covered sheepskin coat. His arms dangled at his sides, his eyes were closed and his fair hair wet with snow.

"Lay him down gently," directed Major Greyson, following the bearers to the cot. "Now—easy—that's it. Pull off his coat, Miller. Move the cot further from the stove—beyond the window."

Under the hands of surgeon and orderly the patient opened his eyes, starting up on his cot, to be immediately pushed back again by Major Greyson.

"Lie still. Don't try to speak," said the surgeon.

"Not ——? Why, I have to," declared the other, bobbing up again as soon as Major Greyson's hand was removed. "Look here, d-don't you believe what t-that fellow t-tells you,—the one I brought in—that he's my s-servant. I heard him g-get that off to one of your s-soldiers. He followed to c-catch me. He's a B-Bolshevik—my prisoner."

The undaunted pluck in the young man's voice

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struggled with the deadly chill of exposure that made his teeth chatter and his tongue stammer over the words. He cast one keen glance at the surgeon as he ended, then lay obediently back on his pillows, closed his eyes and fainted.

"Here, Miller, get a hypodermic needle ready. Pull off his boots, Johnson, and give his legs a gentle rubbing," ordered Major Greyson, his fingers on the unconscious man's fluttering pulse. Half to himself, half to Bob he grumbled, "Of all the rattle-pated idiots. Why must he talk when he's as weak as a cat? What's one Bolshie prisoner more or less?"

"He spoke like an Englishman," said Bob. "Who is he?"

"British officer," said Major Greyson, pointing to the uniform blouse lying across a chair. "I've sent word to their lines. I believe there was only one officer held prisoner anyway, a chap who got caught in a raid last week. Must be this man; he'd be the sort to plunge into a trap."

"Well, he plunged out again," protested Bob. "He took advantage of this storm to escape. Pretty smart of him."

"Yes, if he comes around all right," said the surgeon doubtfully.

"Why, he's no worse than I was."

"No, but as I said before, you are a tough speci-

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men. This lad looks rather frail, though it's true that delicate-looking young Britishers show lots of endurance. Bring more snow, Miller. His foot is about frozen."

The Britisher stirred, opened his eyes and almost at once, in a voice that trembled with weakness, began to speak.

"Went off, did I? Send word to my regiment, ah—Major—won't you?"

"Will you keep quiet?" demanded Major Greyson. "Give your heart a chance to pick up."

"Right-o. Got clean away anyhow—didn't I? I was afraid for a bit I wouldn't pull it off. I——"

The surgeon discovered a white spot at the tip of his patient's ear. He clapped a handful of snow against it. The young officer gasped and for a moment subsided.

"I'll have to stuff his mouth with snow, next," muttered Major Greyson. "I wonder if he's a bit delirious."

Bob smiled, feeling a secret liking for the cocky young Britisher who now, his cot pushed into the coldest corner of the room, lay squirming under Major Greyson's pitiless snow-rubbing.

"Frost-nipped, am I, what?" he gasped after a moment. "I say—got a bit of snow down my throat that time, Major."

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"Captain, will you obey my orders and stop talking?" demanded the surgeon with exasperated calm.

"Stop talking? Better for me, you mean? Somehow I think a gloomy silence is really more — Oh, all right,—I'm dumb."

Bob laughed outright this time. He turned to Androvsky who, head on hand, lay watching the young Britisher, a gentle smile on his pale lips.

"Did you ever see him before, Androvsky? Was he taken while you were with the Bolsheviki?"

"No, *Gospodin* Captain. When I fell wounded no Britisher had been taken."

Bob looked intently at the Russian, remembering the conversation of an hour ago. Androvsky met his gaze with patient, melancholy eyes. But Bob's leg had begun hurting too severely for him to ponder much over the questions that puzzled him. When Major Greyson had given the Britisher a quieting draught and left the room with his aides, Bob snuggled under the blankets out of the chilly air and, with a glance at the steadily falling snow outside the window, fell into a doze.

When he woke, by his wrist-watch it was four o'clock and night had fallen. The orderly had just brought in the lamp and had covered the Britisher with another blanket. Bob saw the young officer stir beneath his covers and look toward the cots in

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front of him. In the lamplight Bob could see that his lean face was very young, more boyish than his own. His fair hair lay in thick locks on his forehead, from which, Bob supposed, it was ordinarily brushed back, for now the Britisher raised a feeble hand and smoothed up the scattered strands which fell over his eyes.

"How do you feel, Captain?" asked Bob, nodding to him.

The Britisher gave a nervous start, then answered a trifle uncertainly, "Why—er—not too well. I say, sir, this is Nikolsk village, isn't it? The American hospital? I expect my colonel knows I'm here?"

"Yes, but the storm is still raging. They could hardly come to you now, and certainly could not transfer you."

"Right. I'm not complaining. A bit dizzy yet. The old bean doesn't work fast. Do you—er—happen to know if there's anything much wrong with me? Rather like to be on to it, you know."

Bob was glad to be able to answer, "No, I'm sure you're quite all right. You were overcome by the cold, and frost-bitten. But the surgeon seemed satisfied before he left. Were you out long in the storm?"

"Long enough. I shiver yet to think of it," said the Britisher, his voice quickening with a return of

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his unquenchable energy. "It's a bit of a storm. I'm grateful to it, though. The snow fell so thick the guards left my window. I broke out, hid, and ran for it. They chased me and did some blind firing. One ran square into me. I grabbed him and brought him in. Nothing much to that end of it. The tough part was the half hour I crouched in the snow under my window, waiting for the camp sentries to give up patrolling and make for shelter."

"Where were you? Behind their lines?"

"In a sort of shack near the Bolshies' barracks—right beyond their trenches. But the bally trenches are not held to-day, except at intervals. I stole over easily enough. By the way, may I know your name?"

"Robert Gordon, Captain, U. S. Flying Corps. Did you find out much about the Bolshevik force?" Bob was thinking again of Androvsky's revelations.

"Robert Gordon, did you say?" asked the Britisher, ignoring the question. "Are there others of that name in your corps?"

"No, not any other in the Flying Corps. Do you think the Germans are supporting the Bolsheviks? Are there any German officers over there now?" persisted Bob, following his own anxious thoughts.

"Didn't see any. Don't know, to tell the truth.

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I was busy wondering if I'd starve to death before I could make a break for it. Horrid bounders, Bolshies. But, I say, this is simply priceless! Haven't you a cousin, Henry Leslie?"

"Yes! Why?" Bob raised his head to see the Britisher's face as he put the question.

"As some original chap remarked, it's a small world. To think we had to come to Archangel to meet. Hope you'll find me worth the trouble."

The Britisher gave a chuckle from under the blankets pulled up about his chin. Bob began to wonder if he could be delirious, as Major Greyson had for a moment suspected. "Look here," he demanded, "just what are you talking about?"

"Talking about you," responded the Britisher, his eyes twinkling. "Cold in here, isn't it?" He cautiously lowered the blanket to explain, "No less important news than this, Captain Bob Gordon. Henry Leslie is my cousin, too, and Arthur Leslie is my brother, and Janet is my sister ——"

"You are Alan Leslie?" Bob almost managed to sit up in bed in his excitement. "You're Arthur's little brother, the s ——" He stopped, growing suddenly red.

"That's it, the 'silly ass'—identity complete," finished Alan, quite unruffled. "I'd give you a handshake, cousin, old thing, if it could be done."

"Alan Leslie!" Bob stared at him, his lips

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slowly parting in a smile divided between surprise at the odd chances of war and a dozen recollections of what he had heard of Alan in the past two years. He remembered Arthur Leslie standing in a doorway in some French village reading a letter in which Alan described his convalescence after a wound received in a burst of reckless bravery. Arthur had shaken his head as he muttered, "That silly ass Alan."

"What happened to you, eh? Stopped a bullet?" asked Alan, studying Bob with his bright, untroubled eyes.

"My leg's broken. My airplane fell and threw me out. I'm all right, they say. How long have you been up here, Alan?"

"Here? Let's see. No, I've lost track. A week or two, I think, before the Bolshies caught me, and a few hundred years after that. Horrid brutes, Bolshies. Cold here, isn't it? They might move me nearer the stove, I think. Where are your people, Bob? Funny I don't know any of them and you've seen Arthur so often. Arthur's the family pride, you know. Not a bad chap, Arthur."

Under the negligent tone in which Alan spoke Bob divined the glowing admiration for his elder brother which had united the two in spite of all Alan's follies. Like a true Britisher, Alan praised

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his brother in deprecating, ambiguous phrases. "Just as they praise England, or English exploits, in a negative, unwilling sort of way," Bob thought. "It's only if someone attacks them that they shed sparks."

He began telling about his family and asking all the questions he had time to put in about the Leslies. When the first curiosity was satisfied on both sides Alan cast a doubtful glance toward Androvsky, who lay dozing on his cot.

"What's that doing in here?" he inquired, jerking his head in the Russian's direction. "Looks like one of my late captors."

"He's a Russian," said Bob, speaking low, "but a Menshevik, forced in by the Bolshies."

"Told you that, did he? I fancy he's having you a bit."

"No. I'm convinced he's straight."

"He's spoofing you. They're a rum lot. I suppose he'd swear to anything to get near this stove. By the way, so would I."

"I'll call the orderly to move you. You were frost-bitten so they didn't dare warm you up. Miller!" Bob shouted, for bells were unknown in Nikolsk hospital.

"Good egg," approved Alan, shivering under his blankets. He glanced toward the window, beyond which thick flakes were still falling. "I hate

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the sight of that snow. Polar bears, that's what this place is fit for. Wonder if they could be trained to fight the Bolshies. Here comes someone, Bob."

Major Greyson entered the room, casting an astonished glance at the young Britisher.

"Who says the British are reserved and distant," he thought, approaching Alan's cot. "Here's this fellow calling Bob by his name after a couple of hours' acquaintance. Well, Captain, how is it?" he asked, taking Alan's cold hand in his. "We've sent word to your regiment. The wires are down but I sent a Russian messenger. You'll have to stay here for a while and be patient."

"No complaints, Major. I'm no end grateful to you," said Alan, looking up at him. "Would you be good enough to move me nearer to the stove, if I'm quite thawed out?"

"What do you think, Greyson?" said Bob, as the surgeon and Miller moved Alan's cot a scant foot nearer to the stove. "This is Captain Alan Leslie and my cousin."

Major Greyson looked quickly at Bob, with so evident a search for signs of feverish excitement that Bob could not help laughing.

"I'm not out of my head, Greyson," he declared. "He is my cousin, really."

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"Why, you told me you'd never seen him," protested the surgeon.

"He hadn't. This is our first meeting. Can't call it auspicious, can one, Major?" said Alan, basking in the faint warmth that reached him. He gave another look toward Androvsky. "Rather a horrid lot of patients you have here, Major, excepting Bob."

Major Greyson smiled as he sat down by Alan's cot. "You seem pretty cheerful, Captain Leslie, but that foot of yours must be hurting quite a bit."

"Oh, rather. I suppose it can't be helped," said Alan coolly. "It's better than when I first woke."

"We'll see what can be done." Major Greyson turned to the Russian who was moving on his cot. "Androvsky, you awake? Miller will wheel you about a little."

"Thank you, *Gospodin* Major," said the Russian, sitting up.

Bob's thoughts, turned once more to Androvsky, led him to inquire again of Alan, when the Russian had gone out and Major Greyson was examining the Britisher's foot, "Didn't you see any Germans in the Bolshevik lines, Alan? Couldn't you guess anything about what they're up to?"

"I didn't see any Germans—not in my guard-house. And I wasn't invited anywhere else.

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What's it all about, Bob? I wasn't a spy, I was a prisoner. Awful beasts, Bol ——"

"Oh, Alan!" Bob came so near saying "Don't be a silly ass" that Arthur's nickname for his brother all at once explained itself.

Major Greyson interposed. "Bob, do you know that a frozen foot hurts even more than a broken leg? Don't expect too much thinking of him for a day or two. Forget the Bolshies for a while. Let other people worry about them until you're on your legs again."

Alan nodded approval. "Can't see why he wants to think of them at all, can you, Major? Yes, that does rather hurt when you touch it. Sorry I jumped. I'll be quiet now."

CHAPTER V

FROM RUSSIA INTO GERMANY

THE snow-storm that began on Christmas afternoon raged for five days before the grey skies lightened and the wind died down. And it was but the first of a long series that during all of January kept Archangel and the surrounding country buried beneath an impenetrable blanket which effectually put an end to fighting, other than small raids and infrequent air battles.

It was a world of snow; snow-covered roofs, paths dug between snow-walls, trees bent down with the burden of their snow-laden branches. Even a shout given in the open seemed dulled and deadened. The air, ice-cold though it was, had no tonic sting to it. It penetrated, chilling and dispiriting, to the soldiers' very bones. The sun peeped out from behind the everlasting clouds only to disappear again before its pale warmth was felt, and in its place fog descended over the snow-fields, shortening the brief hours of daylight still more, so that sometimes the noon dinner hour was no more than over before darkness began to fall.

The snow kept Alan Leslie in the American hos-

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pital for weeks after Christmas, and when he and Bob were well on the road to convalescence it prevented them from moving beyond the hospital's small, crowded rooms, where they shivered in draughts or crouched by the stove, longing for sunshine and a chance to hobble about outdoors a little without plunging into snowdrifts.

"This is no place for you to get well, Bob. We'll send you away," said Major Greyson one morning.

As a result of his friend's negotiations Bob received news about the first of February which raised his spirits with a joyful leap from their tired level.

"It's all fixed, Bob," the surgeon told him, coming into the room, papers in hand. "You're to go south at once, and what's better, they have consented to your father's request. You are to go to the convalescent hospital at Badheim, near Coblenz. Captain Leslie will travel with you on his way to England. This climate won't do any longer for that foot of his."

"Greyson, it's you who fixed it all for me. I'll never forget it!" Bob glowed with delighted anticipation, walking on his mended leg with sudden boldness and confidence. What were the eternal grey skies to him now, or the darkness of early afternoon that already began to fill the room? He

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forgot the hardships of the long journey before him, the weary painful days he had just passed through, as well as the lingering weakness of his body. "And Alan can go with me!" he exclaimed, hardly believing his own good fortune. "When do we start, Greyson? My leg feels as strong as iron."

"Next week if all goes well. I shall send a Hospital Corps man with you. Remember you're not a well man yet, and have a long way to travel. Do you feel strong enough to undertake it? From here to Moscow—to Warsaw—to Berlin?"

"Around the world, if you like, so that it lands me somewhere out of the Arctic Circle," said Bob, undashed in spirit by any prospect of hardship ahead. "Greyson, I'd like to go where the sun's hot enough to sunburn me, and where oranges would drop off the trees into my lap."

"Coblenz won't quite come up to that, but it's a big improvement on Archangel."

"I wish you were coming, Greyson. As Alan would say, 'Horrid beasts—Bolshies.'"

Ten days later Bob and Alan left Archangel to begin their journey south. Toward the end of February, after weeks of slow, interrupted, uncomfortable travel, they reached Berlin, and realized with a swift reaction after days of discouragement, that the worst of the way lay behind them.

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"The longest part, you mean," remarked Alan when Bob made this observation. "Don't know about the worst."

He said this as they emerged from the Friedrichstrasse station onto the broad avenue Friedrichstrasse.

While the Hospital Corps man who accompanied them went in search of a taxicab the two young officers stood looking curiously about them. Alan had but once in his life passed through Berlin and Bob had never set foot in it, but this was not the reason for their motionless absorption. There was something strangely restless and uneasy about the crowd surging through the streets, hurrying in every direction, or stopping short to exchange excited words. A kind of suspense hung over the city, a tense expectation of disaster, perceptible even to strangers casually entering the capital.

"What's wrong with them, anyway, Alan?" asked Bob, completely puzzled. "They look frightened. What can they be afraid of?"

"There's something going on, that's certain," Alan responded, doubtfully too. "Here's our taxi, anyway. Let's get to the hotel."

Miller, the Hospital Corps man, had managed, with the aid of a policeman, to find a ramshackle old vehicle, much the worse for wear, driven by a

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man who looked as frightened as the rest of the population and almost ran into the curb as he drew up before the station.

"A nice car you picked out, Miller," remarked Bob as they got in. "Hotel Adlon," he told the driver.

"Best I could do, sir," declared Miller, getting in after them. "There's some sort of a row on here."

To Bob's and Alan's surprise the policeman climbed up beside the driver and began talking volubly to him, evidently silencing the man's uneasy protests. The taxicab started off jerkily, the motor missing explosions so frequently that Bob pricked up his ears, thinking of his airplane the night he had fallen. "We shan't get far in this," he prophesied.

Alan was staring through the dirty window. A light snow had fallen over the city, but now the sky was clearing and the sun shone from behind drifting clouds. The same hurrying, debating, anxious crowd filled the streets as the taxicab turned into the fine avenue of Unter den Linden and approached the Pariser Platz and the more populous part of the city. Half a mile from the station shots echoed from beyond a building close at hand. A group of men ran out from behind a wall. The crowd shrieked, and some soldiers,

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suddenly appearing, plunged after the fugitives.

The policeman beside the taxi driver shouted in his ear. The man shook his head with every sign of unwillingness, but put on speed nevertheless, and drove rapidly through the disorderly throng, dodging the people as best he could.

"There's a bit of a tittup here, Bob, and no mistake," said Alan, his face toward the window. "Do you 'Sprechen sie Deutsch' enough to ask the bobby to explain?"

"Yes, but why explain now? Let's get to the hotel. It looks like a riot. I'm not a bit anxious to get into a German quarrel."

"Neither am I," agreed Alan fervently. "Jove, it seems to be getting thicker here."

He pointed to a new congestion in the crowd which, apparently divided into conflicting parties, swayed back and forth across the thoroughfare.

"Beg pardon, Captain Gordon," broke in Miller, who sat grasping the two hand-bags as though prepared to jump out at any emergency, "I understood the policeman to say that there's a fight on between the government party and the rebels. Nobody knows yet who's got the upper hand."

Bob and Alan listened uncomprehendingly. No news had reached them in Archangel of the serious

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outbreaks of Bolshevism in Berlin and elsewhere in Germany. The name of Spartacans which the rebels had taken was an unknown word to them. But the terror of the people, the disorder in the once strictly governed city, was plain enough to their eyes.

The taxi continued to force a difficult way through the crowds clustering about the streets, drawn into frightened groups that dispersed into mad flight at each new alarm. Suddenly more shots rang out, this time from the roof of a building bordering the great square called Pariser Platz. The taxi came to an abrupt stop, and, before the policeman could impede him, the driver had sprung from his place and was running headlong across the square toward shelter.

Shots from rifles and machine guns placed on the roofs rained down on the open. The people fled in screaming panic, leaving some of their number stretched on the pavement. A company of soldiers, sheltered behind improvised breastworks of tipped-over wagons, returned the fire, but ineffectually, for the rebels were lying flat on the roofs, nearly invisible. Shots pattered over the taxicab and a bullet smashed a window and buried itself in the cushion behind Miller's back.

"We can't stay here!" Bob shouted. "Come, both of you. We'll run for it!"

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"You can't run, sir," protested Miller, at his wits' end. "Get behind the cab, sir. Won't that protect some?"

The policeman was already down and crouching against the cab, calling out unintelligible orders to people who did not stop to heed him. Another company of infantry reached the square on a run and went to the help of their comrades. But the rebels' increasing fire now made the place almost untenable.

"We can't stay here like rats in a trap," Bob panted, furious at his helplessness. "We can run if we take it slowly, Alan. Go ahead, Miller. No need for you to dawdle, too."

"Take the cushions, Bob! Hold them over us! Better than nothing," cried Alan.

He seized one of the heavy, hair-lined seats from the cab, tossed it to Bob, picked up the other and, holding it above his head, began to run slowly and limpingly across the square. Bob followed, groaning once in spite of himself at the pain in his leg from this unaccustomed speed. He heard bullets strike the pavement around him, and every second expected one to penetrate the cushion, but desperately he ran on, following as best he could the zig-zag course Alan led to put the Spartacist riflemen off their aim. In five minutes they reached the shelter of the houses on the east side of the square

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and, spent and breathless, sank down on the first threshold their steps encountered.

Miller, pale with alarm for his charges, opened one of the bags he had doggedly clung to and thrust a flask into Bob's hand. "We can't stop here but a moment, sir. The shots still reach us." He pointed to a bullet which had just clanged against the pavement.

"Alan!" said Bob, suddenly aghast. He seized the Britisher's hand, pushing back the sleeve from the wrist about which Alan was hurriedly winding a blood-stained handkerchief. "You're wounded!"

Alan shook his head. "Nothing but a flea-bite. A grazing bullet nipped off a bit of skin. Honor bright, Bob." He let Miller fasten the handkerchief more securely. "Wounded upholding the German Empire," he remarked scornfully. "Not much glory to be got out of this."

At the moment that he spoke a fresh burst of firing from the roofs on the opposite side of the square sprayed the pavement in front of the threshold where they sat with bullets. The square was now deserted, except for the two companies of infantry crouched behind their shelter.

"Come on," cried Alan, starting to his feet. "We're done for if we stop here."

He glanced out into the square, then at the houses on each side of them.

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"No chance out there," said Bob. "Inside a house,—it's the only way."

Alan nodded, his keen eyes on the closed windows. Bob ran to one near the street level, cold with a prickling dread of bullets in his back, climbed upon the stone coping and tried to force up the sash. The window was locked.

"Inhospitable beggars," muttered Alan. He sprang on the coping and grasped the window shutters. "Push me up, Miller—on to the sill!" he ordered.

The orderly offered his shoulder for support. Alan reached the window-sill, clung there kneeling, and, driving his elbow through the glass of the upper frame, thrust in his hand and unlocked the catch. He threw open the window, pushed back the heavy curtains and stepped into the house. "All right," he cried, holding out his hands to his companions.

The next moment all three were standing inside a luxuriously furnished room, leaving behind them the deadly rain of bullets and the wounded lying in the sunlit square.

"What now?" inquired Bob, glancing about him uncertainly. "We look uncommonly like housebreakers, but Heaven knows we had excuse enough."

"Yes, my conscience doesn't trouble me," said

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Alan, closing the broken window. "I tell you, Bob, I had the shakes at thought of coming all through the war only to be brought down in the cross-fire of a silly Boche quarrel. You've found out something on your journey at any rate, my lad—the answer to one of those questions that are always worrying you. Whether or not there are Germans with the Bolsheviki at Archangel, there are certainly Bolshies in Germany."

"I say, Alan, we'd better go and explain ourselves to somebody," suggested Bob, smiling in spite of himself at the cool casualness which allowed Alan to stand and converse at his ease in any and all circumstances.

"Right-o. Shall we go on through the house? Doesn't seem to be anyone in it. Pretty taste in furniture."

The windows of the big drawing-room which they had entered were draped with red velvet and white lace curtains and its floor was covered with a red plush carpet. The cushions and upholstery of the massive chairs and sofas were of the same color, and on the chimneypiece stood huge gilt vases filled with artificial flowers. An air of gloomy richness pervaded everything.

The young officers and the orderly went on into a hall, across from which was a closed door. Carpeted stairs led to the second story. Be-

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hind the closed doors sounded the murmur of voices.

"Shall we beard the Prussian in his den, Bob, or go out again and be shot at?" asked Alan, jerking his head toward the door.

For answer Bob knocked at the door, put his hand on the knob and turned it, Alan close behind. "You might wait here, Miller," said Bob. The door opened and the two officers entered a large library, around the center table of which sat half a dozen grave, bearded, pompous-looking men, engaged in excited discussion.

At sight of Bob and Alan several of them sprang to their feet in startled haste. One or two showed signs of terror, the rest looked puzzled, which feeling changed to something like indignation as the young men's uniforms identified them to the Germans' eyes.

"What do you wish here, *meinen Herrn?*" demanded a beetle-browed, professorial-looking person, whose worn frock coat curved tightly over his rounded form. "Have you mistaken your way?"

"We came into this house to escape being shot in the square outside," said Bob without apology. "We have no other desire than to reach our hotel in safety."

"You haven't noticed that there's shooting go-

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ing on, Herr Professor? Take a short walk about the city," suggested Alan, eyeing the group.

His German was so bad that he was scarcely understood, but something of veiled contempt in his tone penetrated the Germans' wits. Resentful glances were turned on the intruders. The man who had spoken before said sharply, his bushy brows drawn closer together:

"We regret extremely that you were exposed to danger. I and my colleagues, the Herrn Councilors, are gathered here to decide how to restore order." Casting an unfriendly eye at the young officers' immovable faces he added with gloomy bitterness, "This anarchy is the result of a long and cruel war."

"Yes, too bad you started it," remarked Alan, losing his temper.

Bob nudged him to be silent. "Could you give us a police escort, or a vehicle of some sort, *mein Herr?*" he asked. "We want to reach the hotel as soon as possible. Our train goes out this evening."

"Certainly. That is reasonable," acceded the German, pompously. He sat down before a telephone on the table and for five minutes vainly tried to get any communication. One of his colleagues muttered angrily:

"The Spartacans have cut some of the wires. I doubt if you can get a police station."

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The man at the telephone shook his head. "No, no. It's the current that's weak. The power houses are not ——" He broke off to say to Bob, with a sort of exasperated dignity, "I will send a servant to fetch you a taxicab and an escort."

"Very well," agreed Bob. "Shall we wait in the drawing-room across the hall?"

"Yes, yes—*sehr gut*." The German walked with the officers to the library door, his face showing all the angry annoyance he was powerless to conceal. "Cursed rebels," he growled, more to himself than to his listeners. "I will inform you, gentlemen, when the taxi arrives."

"He's more put out because we saw his helplessness than at the real state of things," said Alan as they sank down into the depths of a red plush sofa to wait.

"It's funny," pondered Bob, looking out between the heavy curtains at the square, where the firing had slackened. "In spite of Berlin's former good government they don't seem to have any resources at a time like this. Those old codgers talking in there aren't going to accomplish much."

"They only know how to govern by force. Their leaders have no real influence over the people," commented Alan, in one of his rare thoughtful moments. "I expect that burly chap who talked with us is lord and master of all this gran-

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deur." He waved one hand about the drawing-room. "How can he think at all, Bob? Wouldn't even your lively brain be stifled in this wilderness of plush and lace? Why, hello—they've sent a woman for the taxi! Isn't that just like them?"

The street door had closed before he spoke and a slight figure came into view in front of the house—a woman with head and shoulders wrapped in a shawl, who hesitated, visibly frightened, though the firing had ceased and a few citizens again ventured abroad. Bob went to the window and looked down at her as, having evidently summoned up her courage, she stepped off the curb, only to hesitate again on the edge of the square.

"What a beastly shame! Let's stop her," he exclaimed, fumbling with the window-catch beyond the layers of curtain.

"Out the front door's the best," said Alan, making for the hall. "She won't hear you from inside."

He unbolted the house door, pulled it open and ran down the steps. "You speak to her, Bob," he called back as his cousin followed him. "My German is rather worse than yours."

Though all was quiet in the square, an uneasy silence, and the crouching, watchful figures of infantrymen below and Spartacans above suggested that the firing might recommence at any moment.

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Bob ran to the woman's side and touched her arm just as she started at last to cross the square.

"You need not go, Frau," he said, close to her ear. "It's no time for women to be out. Tell me where the police ——" He paused, staring into her face, struck dumb with amazement.

"Mr. Bob!" The woman's voice quivered. Her thin hands clasped the young officer's arm in her overpowering excitement. "Oh, Mr. Bob—you here!"

She spoke in English and Bob abandoned his halting German, though now he hardly knew what he answered in the shock of his astonishment. "You—Elizabeth! Wait, you can't go on. Come back into the house."

"I say, she speaks English? She knows you?" demanded Alan, staring.

Bob had not time to reply before the machine guns on the opposite roofs, as though they had received a fresh supply of ammunition-belts, reopened fire. The silence of the square was rudely shattered. Put-put-put-put-a-put the machine guns hammered, and the rifles cracked in scattering shots sent by both rebels and loyalists. Cries resounded from neighboring windows, and from the Spartacan stronghold on the roofs came faint shouts of triumph.

Bob caught Elizabeth's shoulder and pushed her

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toward the house door. "Go back! Hide!" he ordered. "We'll run for it."

The bullets were not yet falling dangerously near. Both Bob and Alan felt so unwilling to return to the Herr Councillor's drawing-room for an indefinite wait that in silent agreement they began running along the street bordering the square, to the first corner, down which they turned.

The firing sounded fainter, though even here few passers-by were to be met with, their pale, frightened faces, and the locked and shuttered windows of every house showing a state of fear bordering on panic. At the next corner Bob and Alan paused uncertainly, looking vainly about for a policeman.

"Not that way, Mr. Bob! To the right side turn," cried a panting voice just behind.

Elizabeth came up running, her thin little figure shivering in the poor shawl wrapped about her, her quick breath puffing into the cold air.

"Elizabeth!" Bob's voice held sharp reproach. "Why didn't you go back to your master's house? What are you doing here?"

"You cannot the police find, Mr. Bob. I will show you," declared the German woman, still panting. "This way come!" She led the way across the street and around a corner. The officers followed, Alan's curiosity no longer to be suppressed.

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"Who is she, Bob? Are you in league with the enemy?"

"She's not the enemy, poor old soul. She's as pro-Ally as we are. She's done the Allies more than one good turn. She was our servant at home in America before the war. Which way now, Elizabeth?" he asked, as the German woman paused for a second, undecided.

"This way, I think." She hurried on down another street, evidently avoiding open places and crowded thoroughfares. In ten minutes more the three emerged on to Unter den Linden and saw the colored lamp of a police station over a door a few steps away.

"Now, Elizabeth, we're all right. Go back, won't you? Get under shelter before the firing grows worse. Else you may not be able to get into the house at all," entreated Bob, pausing on the sidewalk by the police station door.

"I don't want to go back, Mr. Bob," said Elizabeth, her voice shaking with some emotion that was neither fear nor weariness.

Bob looked into her face and saw that the soft, dark eyes were shining with a sudden hope and joy that illumined her thin, worn face and brought almost a smile to her pale lips.

"I want to stay with you, Mr. Bob. Oh, don't leave me behind, dear, kind Mr. Bob! Take me

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back to America! Surely God put me in your path!"

The objections trembling on Bob's lips were too many to find expression at that moment. He could not bring himself to speak a curt refusal. The little German woman's face touched him too deeply with all its gentle reminders of old days. He hesitated, glanced around him at the avenue, along the sidewalks and pavements of which disorderly crowds were strolling, arguing, fighting, shouting and gesticulating—occasionally broken up by groups of harassed policemen charging fiercely into their midst. Bob felt Alan's hand on his arm and put Elizabeth off for the moment by saying:

"Elizabeth, we can't talk now. Wait until we find a taxi and get to the hotel. You can come that far, anyhow."

Elizabeth nodded, her habitual patience overcoming her eager longing to be answered. She followed the two young men into the station, where a red-faced, worried-looking police sergeant was seated before a desk, his ear to the telephone, his hand fingering reports lying in scattered heaps in front of him. He spoke into the telephone:

"*Ja, ja.* You can do nothing? Himmel! Then call out men from the next precinct. There are none? You ass, what is the use in telling me that? Wait? Yes, yes—hurry!"

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He hung up, breathing fast, caught sight of his visitors, stared, then rose to his feet, demanding, in a voice still unsteady with anger, "What do you wish, Herrn Officers?"

"A taxi, please, and a policeman to escort us to our hotel," requested Bob.

"Everybody's shooting at us. They don't seem to know the war's over," added Alan, looking without any trace of sympathy at the sergeant's frowning, troubled face.

Alan had suffered much during the war, and, in the course of many gallant exploits, had been three times wounded, and left with a bullet buried in his knee which hurt him atrociously when least expected. Human nature forbade that such mild revenge as this should not be sweet to him.

The sergeant grew a deeper crimson, casting a sour look at the young Britisher. "I will get you a taxi, Herr Officer," he said to Bob. "But a policeman—where are they? I haven't a man left here."

"All right, a taxi will do," said Bob. "Only, please tell the driver to stick to his job and not run away at the first shot."

"And if I tell him, will he do it?" grumbled the sergeant. He picked up the telephone once more.

It was half an hour before he succeeded in getting hold of a taxi, and he probably never would have done so if Bob had not told him to offer double

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tariff to pay the driver for his fear of death. In that half hour Elizabeth drew from Bob as much of the Gordon family's recent history as he could collect his wits to impart. At the news that General Gordon was stationed at Coblenz she gave a little cry of joyful thanksgiving.

"I could go there with you, Mr. Bob? Say yes! I could the house of your father keep? I will the hardest work do!"

"Elizabeth, don't be in a hurry," Bob fenced, casting about for decisive objections. "How can you run away from Berlin like this? It's idiotic. You may be sorry. Why, you've no baggage nor anything."

"My baggage, Mr. Bob? The best clothes I have are on my back. No people in Berlin have good clothes now, not even the rich."

Alan said in Bob's ear, "Boche and all, I feel sorry for her. Let's buy her a new shawl, if nothing else."

Bob gave up the struggle of trying to harden his heart against Elizabeth's pleadings. With Lucy in his mind he said, as the slow taxi neared the hotel, which after all this delay turned out to be on the Pariser Platz itself, some hundred yards from the councillor's house.

"All right, Elizabeth, I'll take you to Coblenz. I don't say to America."

CHAPTER VI

THE MYSTERY OF THE FOREST

GENERAL GORDON expected Bob's arrival in Coblenz from day to day, but this did not prevent his surprise when, on leaving the house one February afternoon, he met Bob, Alan and Elizabeth descending at his door-step.

"Bob!" cried the elder officer, catching his son's hands in his, and scanning face and figure for signs of the ravages of pain and illness. "You don't look so bad, my boy. I'm no end glad to see you. Who's this?"

He had turned toward Alan, but at one glimpse of Elizabeth he forgot the Britisher entirely and stood mutely staring.

"Major—I mean to say—General—I with Mr. Bob come," Elizabeth faltered flushing with painful uncertainty as to the welcome that would be accorded her.

Bob, too, looked at his father a little anxiously, wondering if he would be obliged to send the little German woman back to Berlin, but General Gor-

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don's first words, as a slow smile lighted up his face, at once reassured him.

"Well, Elizabeth, I think you're destined to stick by the Gordon family. You've come back to us?"

"General—could I—can I—for you work once more again?" Elizabeth entreated, her English deserting her as it always did in moments of strong feeling or excitement. Her gentle, pleading eyes were raised to Bob's father, who did not hesitate to reply, as he laid a friendly hand on her shoulder.

"Do you think I could refuse you, after what you have done for my children? Stay here and welcome."

Suddenly remembering Alan, who stood silently watching this scene, to him somewhat incomprehensible, General Gordon broke off to say:

"Bob, ask your friend to excuse my bad manners. What is your name, Captain?"

"Alan Leslie, Cousin James, so please you," replied Alan, his eyes twinkling with a childish, never-failing love of surprising people. "There's no limit to what Bob can bring home with him."

After this meeting only a few hours elapsed before General Gordon took his son out to Badheim hospital, where Bob was expected to complete his convalescence. The long, tedious journey from Archangel, especially the day spent in Berlin, had

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set him back more than he liked to admit, and he foresaw that active duty would have to be postponed a few weeks longer. Alan, likewise, found his leg and foot very painful and willingly enough accepted an American surgeon's advice to delay his departure to England.

"Now that I know I'm sure to get there, I can be patient," he said to Bob, all his old, care-free spirits restored at the near approach of home and freedom. "It won't be half bad to stay on a bit with you, and, besides, I'd like to see your sister. Arthur's always talking about her. When you all come back to England to stop with us I don't want to be the only one of the family who doesn't know her."

There were more introductions to be made at Badheim hospital, when Lucy had got over her first delight at seeing Bob so nearly well and at actually having him there in her charge. A few gay words from Alan's careless lips swept away the momentary seriousness that fell upon her in her boundless gratitude at Bob's return. She presented her brother and Alan to Armand and Michelle, a thrill of pleasure warming her from all the sad misgivings of past days.

Bob had to describe Elizabeth's reappearance and all that followed. Lucy could not curb her impatience long to hear the whole of her brother's

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adventures since the unlucky twenty-third of December—or so Bob accounted it, thinking regretfully of Rittermann still flying free. Lucy inwardly rejoiced at the disaster that had brought him out of the frozen North. In less than a day she had gleaned from him the greater part of the happenings of the past two months. Also, not strange to anyone who knew the extent of Bob's and Lucy's confidence, she had told him of her selfish repinings at the delayed return to America, and as many incidents as she had time for of the daily life at the little hospital buried in the forest.

In the midst of one of these conversations, as Bob lay back in solid comfort on a long chair by a window overlooking the clearing, Lucy started up at seeing a well-known figure mount the hospital steps.

“Oh, Bob, look—it's Larry.”

Bob was out of his chair in a second and, unmindful of Lucy's cautions, made for the door and met his friend on the threshold.

“Well, Bob! And all right, too—not a thing wrong with you,” cried Larry, catching Bob's shoulders and giving him a shake in his relief and satisfaction. “If I'd listened to Lucy, some of these days we've been through, I'd have imagined you'd come back in little pieces. She's a pessimist where you're concerned. Come in and sit down,

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idiot — I'll be giving you a relapse," said Larry, all in one breath, as he led Bob back to his chair.

"It's great to see you, Larry," declared Bob, sinking down obediently, though he added, as a protest against further coddling, "I'm not so helpless, you know. A little tired now because Alan Leslie and I had to run and dodge through Berlin to escape Spartacan bullets."

"No! Let's hear about it. Are things so bad there? Coblenz seems as quiet as a graveyard."

"I'll tell you the whole yarn presently. I want you to meet my cousin. Lucy, see if Alan's anywhere around. I think you and he will get along, Larry. There's something wonderfully alike in your way of looking at things—a sort of happy-go-luckiness ——"

"I suppose you mean that he doesn't expect to shoulder the responsibilities for his regiment, or to capture the entire Bolshevik army by himself," retorted Larry. "He was with you in Berlin, you said? Now I see why you got out alive."

Bob laughed at him. "It sounds natural to hear you going for me, Larry," he said. "I don't mean that Alan won't plunge into danger—you do it, too, in spite of that cautious talk. I mean he won't bother to think things out, but takes them calmly as they come. He's a fine chap to have

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along in a tight place. You can't phase him—he's always prepared for the worst."

"Like Lucy," remarked Larry, looking toward the door through which she had disappeared. "That girl has no end of sand, Bob. She went on working without a murmur—except once in a while to me—when no one knew just how things were with you. She's been through a lot in the past two years. I hope you can all go home soon."

"We can't, though—not Father nor I. And what is the use in Lucy's going home when Father is stationed here? But we'll go to England before long. The Leslie's want us to come."

"Hooray, will you?" cried Larry, with what seemed quite disproportionate satisfaction until he explained, "I'm going there myself in a month or two. They've offered me the chance to finish at Oxford the year I lost at Yale when war began."

On the Sunday following Bob's and Alan's arrival the two convalescents declared themselves longing for a little exercise. Lucy and Michelle, finding it hard work to keep them quiet inside the hospital, proposed a short walk through the forest.

"Seems to be your one idea of amusement here—a walk in the forest," said Larry, who had come out to dinner and, together with Armand, volunteered to join the party.

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"It is," said Lucy. With faint irony she added, "Perhaps you'd rather take a walk around and around the clearing?"

"You will see it is pleasant in the wood," put in Michelle. "And there we often meet the little Boche children of Franz the *bucheron*."

"You and Bob and Lucy have all sorts of queer friends, Mlle. de la Tour," observed Alan, walking cautiously on the uneven ground, for his foot hurt him. "When I first saw Bob in Archangel he was having an all-day talk with a wild-looking Bolshevik who pretended to be something different ——"

"He was, too, if you mean Androvsky," interrupted Bob.

"And no sooner do we get to Berlin," continued Alan, unheeding, "than he finds an old German friend and fetches her along to Coblenz."

"Oh, but Elizabeth is pro-Ally, Alan," protested Lucy eagerly. "She has been for two years. Can't you get that through your head?"

"It took me a long time to do so," said Michelle, smiling. "You remember, Lucy, how I would not believe?"

"Yes, I don't blame you." Lucy caught her friend's arm with swift recollection of Château-Plessis and the days of captivity. "But once you knew her you couldn't help trusting her."

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"Poor old thing, she felt lost in Prussia," said Bob, remembering the entreaty of Elizabeth's eyes and voice in the midst of the Berlin hurly-burly. "She wants awfully to go back to America."

"Well, I wouldn't have her bring friend husband along, if I were you, Bob," advised Larry. "I didn't take much to Karl."

"Even before the war I hated him," said Bob thoughtfully. "He's given me some awful moments! I never want to set eyes on him again."

"That Franz isn't so unlike him—he has the same sly look," commented Larry. "And a kind of sour smile as though he had swallowed something bitter."

"Perhaps smiling at American officers gives him a sick feeling," said Alan. "What do you have to do with him?"

"Nothing," said Lucy, "except that he supplies the hospital with wood. But he lives in the forest near the mineral spring, so we often see him, for Michelle and I like to play with his children. They are children, you know—Boche or not—and quite cunning."

"Cunning—I wager they are. Cunning as foxes," declared Alan, feeling a fresh grudge against his late enemies as the old wound in his knee gave him a sharp twinge.

"No, I mean cunning in the American sense,"

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explained Lucy, laughing. "For us it means—well—pretty, amusing—or, what else, Bob?"

"Anything that children are—or kittens or puppies," supplemented Bob vaguely.

"Captain Beattie always objected to my using cunning that way," said Lucy, "but he never could give me the right word to take its place. Oh, look, here comes Adelheid."

They had no more than left the hospital clearing to enter the forest, through which the bright afternoon sun fell in delicate shafts on the snow-covered ground, but Adelheid had grown bolder now, and sought her friends almost at the hospital doors.

"Good-day, young ladies," she greeted Lucy and Michelle, running up with a beaming smile, her flaxen braids streaming. "And *meinen Herrn*, good-day to you," she stammered, bobbing a stiff little curtsey to the four officers, her fluent tongue checked by a sudden return of shyness.

"Where are the boys, Adelheid?" asked Lucy, taking her hand. "Have you lost them in the woods again?"

"Ach, no, Fräulein, I will not do that any more, for Papachen whipped me," cried the child, looking up with friendly confidence into Lucy's face. "He is cross now, Papachen. I think he is angry about something. I don't know what."

Larry asked Michelle, "Is Franz as afraid as

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ever of leaving Adelheid alone with you? Something funny there."

"Yes, Captain Eaton, he calls her often away from us—although when he himself is with her he lets her stay as long as she pleases. He even smiles and approves Lucy's kindness to the little ones."

"What is it he's afraid she will tell?" Larry pondered.

"She has told us all sorts of tales, but nothing he could fear to have known, unless he is ashamed of his poverty," Michelle answered thoughtfully. "What most puzzles me is the sad, anxious face of the children's *maman*. She has some grief more than everyday cares. She looks frightened."

"Probably the old Boche beats her as he does this poor little Bocheling," surmised Alan, who had listened to Michelle's words. "You speak English very well indeed, Mademoiselle. Have you ever been in England?"

"Yes, before the war," Michelle nodded, "but not for very long. Armand speaks better than I."

"It's time you both came again," suggested the Britisher. "The war's over."

"Is it, I wonder?" said Bob with sudden misgivings.

Alan gave him an exasperated glance. "Are you going to begin again, you trouble-hunter?" he demanded. "Will you believe it, Captain



LARRY STOOD WITH LUCY BY THE DOOR

IN THE HOME SECTOR

Eaton, I had no sooner got my feet unfrozen, up in that beastly Arctic hole, than this bally cousin of mine began asking me questions about the organization of the enemy and who was leading them. As though I wasn't fed-up enough with Bolshies not to discuss them in my leisure hours."

"He's always like that," said Larry, laughing. "You think you have a peaceful moment only to find he's discovered some horrid mission and embarked on it. He has a future before him—I don't deny that. But we'll have the easier time of it."

"You have a right to speak feelingly, Larry," said Bob, smiling. "You've been my rescuer more than once."

Bob was growing light-hearted, except for his moments of doubt and uncertainty. His leg was really better to-day. Larry and Alan were getting on together as well as he had prophesied, and he foresaw a pleasant fireside for Larry at Highland House during his year in England.

They approached the woodcutter's clearing and came to the spring, which still bubbled clear, though a thin film of ice clung to the edges of the stone. Bob bent over the basin, watching the water spurt up endlessly from the sandy bottom, where grains of sand danced in the rapid stream and green mosses stirred their delicate tendrils. Larry stood with Lucy by the door of the rustic shed.

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From the cottage chimney rose a waving white smoke-column.

“Hello, who’s that?” he asked, pointing.

“Oh, oh!” cried Adelheid, who had peered out too, and now shook her little head sadly, a cloud dimming her brightness. “Mamachen will not be pleased. It is the Herr Johann.”

At the child’s earnest words the whole party looked curiously through the trees at the man who was nearing the threshold of Franz’ cottage, treading the snow with a quick, light step. He was tall and blond, dressed like a hunter, with straight knickerbockers, short jacket and Tyrolean cap. His clothes seemed good, his manner assured, and as he reached the cottage door he called, “Franz! Franz! It is I.”

The woodcutter appeared from behind the cottage, brushing off the bark which clung to him after piling up his fagots.

“Good-day, Herr Johann,” he said, his loud voice carrying far in the winter solitude. Hurrying to the cottage door he flung it open and signed to the stranger to enter.

“Been heaping up your fagots, eh?” inquired Herr Johann, lingering a moment at the door-step to glance at the neat piles of wood, fruits of the woodcutter’s daily toil. “Ah, Franz, my good fellow, you’ll be rich yet.”

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"Be pleased to enter," invited Franz, holding open the door. The two disappeared inside and the door was closed.

"Who is Herr Johann, Adelheid?" asked Bob. "Do you know him?"

"Yes, Herr Officer," the little girl responded, her face still troubled. "He is a gentleman whom Papachen has served for many years. Oh, in the war, and long ago! But now when he comes—I don't know why—my mother is more than ever unhappy. She cries and Papachen grows angry. The last time Herr Johann came she begged Papachen not to go with him into the forest, but he would go and said only, 'Do you want always to be poor and hungry?' Herr Johann heard and laughed. And he gave Wilhelm a mark, but Mamachen took it from him."

"Is that all you can tell?" inquired Larry. "Hasn't he another name besides Herr Johann?"

"I am sure he has, but I do not know it. I have never dared talk to him. He seems a great man, very proud."

"She's hit it there," remarked Larry. "What is the great man doing here? I don't suppose he comes after wood."

"That straight figure has worn the uniform of a Prussian officer," said Armand, still looking to-

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ward the cottage door. "And he seems not to have lost the habit of giving orders."

"What is a hunter doing in the winter forest?" asked Alan. "The chance of finding a few rabbits in a hollow can't allure our friend Boche from very far."

"Gives us something to wonder about, anyway," said Larry.

"Still, if he is hunting, it's not so strange that he should stop to get warm in Franz' cottage," declared Lucy, unwilling to be disturbed.

"No, but why should the child's mother feel badly about that?" objected Bob.

"And the man has been here often. He had the air of coming to a rendezvous," added Armand.

"He spoke to Franz like a master," said Michelle, leaning against a pine tree, her clear, grave eyes looking off into the distance.

"Adelheid," Bob demanded, "how do you know that Herr Johann is a gentleman? How do you know he is not a poor hunter, or a woodcutter like your father?"

"Ach, Herr Officer, no!" protested Adelheid, visibly shocked. "He is a Herr, a rich man to be treated with respect. You have only to hear him talk ——"

"A great man, in her eyes, is someone in a good coat who gives orders in a loud voice," said Alan.

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"This wonderful Johann looks to me like a cocky young lieutenant who doesn't yet know he's demobilized. Adelheid, you're shivering." He dropped on one knee to the child's height and, studying the little figure wrapped in its tattered shawl, added in fragmentary German, "Run home and don't stand here in the snow."

"I've made her new stockings," said Lucy, taking Adelheid's cold little hand. "But the boys seem to wear everything and leave Adelheid only the old rags. They are terribly poor."

"Are you coming to the cottage, Fräulein?" coaxed Adelheid. Then, suddenly remembering Herr Johann, she cried fearfully, "Oh, no, no, do not come now! The Herr Johann fills both rooms, walking up and down to talk, and it is better not to disturb him."

"Much better," agreed Bob. "Though I'd rather like to ask him a few questions. Shall we go back to the hospital? I'm getting cold standing here in ambush."

"Here comes the quarry, I expect," said Alan as the cottage door reopened.

He and the others, about to turn back through the wood, paused a moment to watch the unknown come out, still talking to Franz, who followed at his heels. The two little boys peeped timidly around from behind their father's legs.

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“*Sehr gut!*” exclaimed Herr Johann, a touch of impatience in his tone, in spite of his words. “Till Tuesday, then ——” He approached the woodcutter and spoke close to his ear. Franz shook his head, denying something with energy. Herr Johann appeared satisfied, gave Franz a curt nod and started briskly off across the clearing, leaving the woodcutter bowing to his back, his old cloth cap in his hand.

“He’s politer to Herr Johann than to us,” remarked Larry, watching the German’s clumsy courtesies with surprised amusement. “‘Till Tuesday.’ I can’t see the attraction.”

“Good-bye!” cried Adelheid, with a sudden prick of conscience at seeing her father glance inquiringly about the clearing. She flashed a brief smile at her friends and ran through the trees into the open, to where Franz stood awaiting her beside the cottage door.

“He is always afraid that she has gone to the hospital to see us,” declared Michelle, as Adelheid with slowing steps followed her father into the cottage. “Oh, there is something strange about it all.”

“Why, Michelle, it can’t be anything. It seems queer to us because we can’t follow it,” Lucy protested, half amused and half annoyed at her friend’s seriousness. “What could happen here?”

IN THE HOME SECTOR

It's so peaceful I sometimes forget we are in Germany."

"Yes, that's the trouble. We forget it too easily," said Bob, as they walked back through the forest. "It's safer in these days to keep your eyes open."

This time Alan had no fault to find with Bob's suspicious tone, and he echoed Michelle's words of a moment before, "It looks queer. But I give it up. They can't be plotting to recruit an army of pine trees."

Larry seemed unwilling to commit himself, though he did not share at all Lucy's impatience and apprehension. He walked along the forest aisles at her side, his eyes raised thoughtfully to the tree-tops, where the last rays of sunset still lingered, though twilight had begun to deepen between the trunks and touch with violet shadows the snowy ground. The profound stillness seemed to augur future troubles.

However, Herr Johann had no power to dampen anyone's spirits for long. The officers were conscious enough of the upper hand now in any dealings with the Boches. Their only lingering dread was that some last trick on the enemy's part might delay the settlement of peace and the troops' homecoming. That indefinite alarm thrust aside, they were inclined to treat Franz' little schemes lightly,

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and to be mildly amused at the prospect of discovering his secret.

"Leslie, you ought not to leave us yet," said Larry to Alan. "You'll miss all the fun. There's a mystery in this forest now. I think I've solved it, though. Franz is the Kaiser, incognito; Herr Johann is the Kronprinz, and Wilhelm is the heir of the Hohenzollerns."

"Some weak points there, Eaton," said Alan, laughing. "Since when does the All-Highest treat his wayward son so politely?"

"Anyway, Adelheid couldn't have kept it all to herself," said Lucy, smiling. "She would have told us, just as she did about the little farm in Alsace. That must have been hard for those children, leaving their home."

Armand flashed a quizzical glance at her. "So it was, Mademoiselle. And very hard, too, for the French when Germany wrested Alsace from France and gave the French people their choice between exile or German dominion. The wood-cutter's children must help pay the debt."

Lucy was silent. Once more she felt, as she had often done in the old days with Michelle, that the French had suffered and endured beyond the power to rally and forget their wrongs as young America could do.

In a moment Alan said lightly, "The only way,

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Eaton, for me to go home in peace, leaving the mystery unsolved, is for you all to promise to come over before the year is up and tell me the whole tale. We'll sit around a roaring English fire ——"

"Or on an English lawn," put in Lucy, thinking of Janet Leslie and Highland House. "The winter won't last forever, Alan."

"Whichever you like," Alan nodded. "And we'll forget for an hour that German forests, occupied cities, surly woodcutters and proud Herrs exist on earth. Is it a promise?"

"Promises are queer things," said Lucy thoughtfully. "I've promised to do lots of things that never happened."

"If wishing is a promise, you have our word," said Michelle, with the pretty, unaffected warmth that sometimes lighted her gravity.

"But, Alan, if we should go there I'm afraid you'll still be disappointed," Lucy insisted. "We shan't have a thing to tell you, unless Larry makes it up."

"I can always do that," agreed Larry. "But perhaps I shan't have to. What's got into you lately, Lucy? You used to be as keen as Bob in scenting trouble and looking for dark days ahead at sight of a Boche whisker. Now there's no stirring you. You're stodgy. Good English word, Leslie?"

CAPTAIN LUCY

“Scotch, old bean,” said Alan. “Perhaps Lucy’s a bit fed-up with it all and wants to turn her back on it. That’s my feeling.”

“Is it, Alan? That’s just how I feel!” cried Lucy in eager agreement. “I’m sick of it. I don’t long for any more adventures. I want to go home.”

“If your dog were around now, he’d begin to howl,” said Larry. “Don’t look so dismal, Lucy. Why, we have all sorts of luck.”

“Oh, I know. I’m not dismal,” said Lucy, smiling at her own earnestness. “Only I hate to hear you talking as though the Germans weren’t really beaten. If the war commenced again I think I’d be the biggest coward on either side.”

“Don’t worry,” said Larry. “It will take more than Franz to recommence it.”

CHAPTER VII

ALAN TAKES A HAND

THE convalescents went on improving until, at the end of another week, they were too active to be easily taken care of.

"You'd better look out, Bob, or they'll be putting you back at work," Larry said to Bob a few days before Alan's departure.

"There's something in that," declared Bob thoughtfully.

"No, there isn't," said Lucy, "for our surgeon said his leg wasn't strong yet. He can't walk far. He mustn't catch cold. He really isn't well at all."

Larry, Alan, Bob and General Gordon all laughed at this, for Bob's hearty appetite and the warm color returning to his thin cheeks gave little cause for alarm. The conversation took place at dinner one Sunday in March, at General Gordon's quarters in Coblenz. Elizabeth waited at table and gave, to Bob and Lucy, such a natural and homelike air to the meal that Bob could not resist telling her how glad he was to see her there.

CAPTAIN LUCY

Elizabeth stopped pouring the coffee into his cup and, forgetting where she was, exclaimed with trembling earnestness, "Oh, Mr. Bob, often now I think—what if you refuse that day to bring me from Berlin!"

Suddenly realizing her boldness, she checked herself, cast an apologetic glance toward General Gordon and slipped noiselessly from the room.

"I wonder at her devotion," said Larry. "Where's that husband of hers, General? Has she quite forgotten him?"

"No, but Karl was very harsh with her for befriending the Allies," said General Gordon. "She feels uncertain of his kindness now, and, after him, we are the friends she most values."

"Quite an honor," remarked Larry.

"It's a blind sort of devotion, but a very real one," said General Gordon.

"I suppose Karl asks nothing better than to make friends with America now," said Bob. "I dare say he'd make up with Elizabeth and be glad of the chance. I think he's still a prisoner, Dad, unless he's been lately exchanged."

"I don't care where he is, so long as it's some distance away," remarked the general. "By the way, Bob, did you know I have Cameron here with me? Quite like old times."

IN THE HOME SECTOR

"No, is he? Well, this *is* the Home Sector, as Larry said," cried Bob, delighted. "How is the old trump? Has he quite recovered?"

"Oh, entirely. He's a true soldier. Not even a German prison could down him long."

"That the fellow you set free, Bob?" asked Alan. "Arthur told me about it. He said he did his best to dissuade you."

"Yes, I was rather a fool," said Bob. "Without Larry—and Lucy—I don't think I'd have pulled it off."

"How soon do you cross the Channel, Alan?" asked General Gordon.

"Three days from now, Cousin James, unless another storm delays sailings."

"It's a hard winter. I'm glad you're out of Archangel, Bob," said the general. "I wish all our boys were—or else big reinforcements sent that might accomplish something."

"That's the idea, Cousin James. Enough to smash the Bolshies and quit. They seem uncommon strong and pig-headed of late. Ask Bob the theory he stuffed me with up there. He thinks they have real pig-heads—Boche officers—leading them."

"I shouldn't wonder. How are you now, Alan? Foot feel all right?"

"Yes, sir. I'm absolutely in the pink. I'd like

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some work to do, but Lucy won't let me help her at the hospital."

"Yes, I will, if there's anything you know how to do," Lucy offered. "Could you get rid of any energy bottling spring water?"

"Might try. Better than sitting inside the hospital, staring at the pine trees and trying to coax your little friend to talk to me."

"Don't you like her?" asked Lucy, always eager to hear Michelle praised.

"I do. She's one of the sort that made France able to stick it out to the bitter end. Only she's too old for her age. I'd like to see her laugh oftener."

"She will, but not quite yet. She's been through—things." Lucy stopped, suddenly unwilling to talk about the past.

"Eaton, you're going to Oxford? I'm glad," said Alan to Larry. "We'll all meet again in England before Lucy has time to get much 'homesicker.' I don't care if you've no mystery to clear up, Lucy. Come anyway."

"It's going to be a great day, Alan, when you get home," said General Gordon. "Your mother will have all three back again—more than she ever hoped for."

"Yes, and Arthur and I about as hale as ever. Poor old Dad has lost his arm—but it's his left. We're in luck. I'm awfully grateful to you,

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Cousin James, for getting me placed here for convalescence. It hasn't been bad, you know." Alan spoke with more warmth than his words held, looking at the faces around him with the clear, casual glance that hid so much from the average passer-by, yet somehow contrived to win him countless friends. "I'm almost fond of my little slice of German forest," he added. "Lucy, you must let me help you to-morrow and walk through it once more."

Lucy was willing enough and, on the day following, she and Alan volunteered to go with the orderly to the spring. The small staff at Badheim hospital made it necessary for each member of it to perform a variety of tasks. Lucy, far from objecting to the lack of routine, rather liked it, and found her changing duties helped to keep her from feeling the monotony of her hard-working daily life. Especially she liked being out-of-doors on these crisp, sunny winter days, when the snow felt dry and firm underfoot and the green pine-boughs shook white flakes on her head when the cold breeze stirred them.

Alan was in high spirits at the certainty of seeing England before the week was past. He overflowed with such light-hearted gayety that Lucy soon reflected a part of it and, forgetting the forest silence, talked and laughed until the squirrels be-

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gan chattering above her head and a surprised white rabbit paused in her path and fled into the shadows.

“Don’t make me laugh, Alan,” she said, as they went on deeper into the woodland. “Somehow it always seems out of place here.”

“We’re out of place, if you like,” said Alan, refusing to be silenced. “Come back home and I’ll show you a real English forest, as beautiful as this, and yet without the gloom. You couldn’t imagine Robin Hood and his men singing among these trees.”

“No, not a bit. I’ve heard Franz sing, but it was *Deutschland über Alles*, and that’s not gay.”

“Nor true, either. The orderly’s got ahead of us. We’d better hurry.”

They approached the spring, where the soldier had unlocked the bottling apparatus and was already unloading his hand-cart of bottles. The three set to work and in twenty minutes had completed the task. The orderly put things to rights and began trundling off his load while Lucy and Alan still lingered by the stone basin, watching the clear, bright water, into which the sunbeams twinkled through the forest boughs.

“I wonder where the children are,” said Lucy, looking toward the cottage.

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"Gone wood-cutting with the old man," Alan suggested.

"No, he never takes them along."

"Here he is, I fancy," said Alan, nodding toward the open.

Two or three notes of a clear whistle sounded from among the trees at the opposite side of the clearing. Alan got up and looked through the pines with sudden curiosity.

"It's not Franz at all," said Lucy, by his side. "It's Herr Johann, and I don't know who else."

The whistle had been once repeated but, on receiving no answer, the whistler and his companion emerged from the forest and began walking quickly across the snow-covered clearing to Franz' cottage. Herr Johann was dressed as when Lucy had last seen him. His companion looked like a German farmer. He was tall and burly, and wore a thick jacket, woolen mittens, and boots, below patched grey soldier's trousers. Herr Johann hammered on the cottage door.

It was presently opened by Franz' wife, who, by shaking her head and pointing toward Coblenz, evidently explained that her husband had gone to town with his load of wood. Herr Johann gesticulated with some vehemence. The woman listened in stolid acquiescence. The second man waited in silence, shuffling his booted feet in the snow. After

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five minutes' conversation the two turned away and, recrossing the clearing, disappeared among the trees. Franz' wife stood watching them until they were out of sight.

"Lucy, I'm jolly curious to know where they are going," exclaimed Alan. "Why shouldn't we walk in that direction ourselves? I expect we can go where we please in American-occupied territory as well as a couple of sly, whistling Boches."

Lucy nodded agreement, willing enough to dog the Germans' footsteps, though she had little idea that they would lead to anything of interest. She and Alan began skirting the clearing at a quick walk, keeping just within the last fringe of pine trees. In a few minutes they reached the opposite side and, without much search, came upon the Germans' footsteps in the snow, and, in a moment, heard them talking together as they walked on a dozen yards ahead, an occasional twig cracking beneath their feet.

"Don't let them hear us if you can help it," said Alan, close to her ear. "Don't hide, but be as quiet as you can. I want to learn their direction."

The Germans walked on at a brisk, swinging gait, Herr Johann talking volubly, his companion answering mostly in monosyllables. They never looked back and seemed oblivious of their stalkers. Alan and Lucy kept them just in sight, though this

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became more difficult as the forest grew denser, the pines alternating with low-branching firs and cedars and the broad brown trunks of oaks.

Suddenly a narrow woodland road came into view, winding among the trees. Herr Johann and the other paused to look keenly along it, as far as its windings would permit. Then they followed it a short distance, each one taking a different direction. In a moment the man who looked like a farmer gave a low shout and, reappearing in sight, made a gesture that brought Herr Johann walking quickly toward him. He pointed down the narrow road, and Herr Johann, giving a nod of satisfaction, sat down on the bulging root of an oak tree and proceeded to fill a pipe. The other stood waiting, leaning against the trunk.

"What do they see?" Lucy whispered to Alan from behind their shelter of fir-boughs.

"I expect it's old Franz himself," Alan murmured, his face aglow with excited amusement. "I say, Lucy, isn't this simply priceless? What a pity Bob isn't here with one of his theories. I can't make it out."

As he spoke a faint creaking of wheels sounded on the road, and in another minute a team composed of a horse and donkey appeared in sight from the direction of Badheim and Coblenz, drawing Franz' wagon, upon which he himself sat, in

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front of a slender load made up, so far as Lucy and Alan could see, mostly of a bale of hay and some cabbages. At sight of the men awaiting him he pulled up with a start, sprang down in front of the tree where Herr Johann sat, took off his cap, and made his awkward bow.

Herr Johann spoke too low for Alan and Lucy to hear the whole of his phrases. Something like this was the best that they could catch:

“—keep your word, eh, Franz?”

Franz plunged into what sounded like apologies, his rough voice also subdued, ending with, “—two hours in Coblenz.”

Again all that was audible of Herr Johann's reply was, “—reach the river?”

Franz shook his head dubiously as he said something like, “—harder than ever. And I had to unload it all.”

Alan began creeping nearer. Lucy caught his arm, whispering sharply, “You mustn't! They'll see you.”

Alan stopped, nodding agreement. Lucy's heart was beating fast. For the first time she felt a prickling uneasiness and a fear that all this might not be so innocently explained as she had believed. Straining her ears, she listened once more.

Herr Johann pointed to his stolid companion

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and, as though comparing the two men, said to Franz what ended with, "—more than you in a week's work. —a whole month?"

Franz shook his head in eager denial and, dropping on one knee before Herr Johann, he poured out explanations or assurances of which neither Lucy nor Alan could hear enough to piece one sentence together.

After listening a few minutes Herr Johann got up, knocked his pipe against the tree, waved his hand as though to say that words meant little to him, then, as if relenting, he clapped Franz on the shoulder and gave him a short, friendly nod. Franz' harsh, sour face eagerly watched the other, drinking in these signs of reconciliation. Herr Johann, without more words, started off across the road with his companion beside him and the two disappeared in the forest.

Franz stood a full minute looking after them, motionless, his cap still twisted in his lean hands. Then slowly he remounted his wagon, spoke to his team and passed out of sight along the winding road.

Alan and Lucy looked at each other, stirred their cold, cramped limbs and set off in the general direction of the hospital. The short afternoon was fading into twilight and a bleak wind swept the forest branches.

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"What on earth is it all about, Alan?" Lucy demanded, and her voice held nothing of Alan's joyous excitement at the mysterious rendezvous, but only anger and anxiety. "It *can't* be anything, anything that we need fear."

"Fear—no. But I expect it ought to be looked into. If three Boches come together at sound of a whistle and confer in the depths of the forest it isn't for the sake of upholding the Entente, nor the Star-Spangled Banner."

"But it might be for the sake of getting around the food restrictions. Father has caught them at that," said Lucy, desperately unwilling to be alarmed at the fragmentary conversation to which they had just listened.

"Yes, it might be that. In fact it's likely enough," assented Alan. "If I'd had another fellow with me instead of you we might have confronted them then and there and demanded an explanation."

"Oh, but—then we'd never have found out anything," protested Lucy. "Don't you think Herr Johann has some good story ready to tell?"

"Perhaps. But I like settling things. Never could wait to puzzle a matter out. Let's run, Lucy. Aren't you frozen?"

"Rather," said Lucy, still thoughtful.

They fell into a jog-trot, for it was hard to run

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fast among the thickly-planted trees. Alan said in a moment, as though thinking aloud:

"He was certainly taking orders. But orders for what? An uprising? Not likely."

"Oh, Alan, perhaps Franz is an old servant of Herr Johann's. Maybe he has charge of some property for him," Lucy suggested, vaguely enough, in spite of her insistence.

"I thought you said he had been an Alsatian farmer," objected Alan. "Oh, well, perhaps we're making a fuss about nothing."

In half an hour they were again skirting the cottage clearing. Franz had reached home and was engaged in unharnessing his team and putting wagon and animals into the shed behind the cottage.

"Too bad the donkey can't tell us where it's been," said Alan, as a loud bray broke the stillness. He and Lucy paused a moment to watch the wood-cutter's simple occupation.

Adelheid and Wilhelm were standing beside their father, Wilhelm with the donkey's halter-rope in his hand. Franz cast a sharp glance toward the fringe of pines behind which Lucy and Alan stood. Then he spoke to Adelheid, who immediately looked in the same direction, then ran across the clearing and straight through the trees to Lucy's side.

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“*Guten tag, Fräulein,*” she panted, smiling her beaming smile, which Lucy hardly echoed in her bewildered surprise. “Papachen saw you here, and he asks if you and the Herr Officer will not come and warm yourselves in our cottage. It is growing cold.”

Lucy, unwilling enough, looked at Alan. He stared at Adelheid, then across the clearing at Franz, who stood on the cottage threshold, one hand on the latch, looking inquiringly toward them.

“This is a rum go,” Alan said at last. “Wonder when he saw us. Shall we go, Lucy? It seems to be our move.”

Lucy spoke to Adelheid. “I don’t think we’d better stop now, thank you very much. It’s rather late.”

“Please, Fräulein!” the child begged, her face suddenly clouded with disappointment. “Papachen invites you.” She repeated this as though to impress on Lucy the importance of such rare hospitality, and added, “You need only stop to warm yourselves. It is not yet dark.” She pulled gently at Lucy’s hand.

Not finding a new argument, Lucy slowly followed her into the clearing, glancing doubtfully at Alan for guidance.

“All right. Let’s go for a moment. I’d like to

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see his face now. No Boche can successfully hide all his thoughts."

"Perhaps not," answered Lucy uncomfortably. "But the trouble is, I can't either."

She hardly met Franz' eyes when the German opened the door for them, with his awkward bow and sour smile. To hide her face she bent over little Wilhelm and pulled up the ragged stockings falling down his cold, bare legs.

"How did you happen to see us, Franz?" inquired Alan, as nearly as his wretched German would permit. Alan's verbs were always in the wrong place.

Franz puzzled for a second over the twisted phrase. Lucy wished Alan would not ask questions. As they entered the cottage Franz answered readily enough:

"I saw you and the Fräulein passing along by the clearing, and as you walked fast and seemed cold I sent the little one to ask you to warm yourselves by my fire. The Fräulein is very good to us. Trudchen!" he shouted, opening the door into the second room of the cottage.

Whatever Alan might decipher from Franz' expression, Lucy did not get very far in reading it. He looked to her sombre, morose and unfriendly as ever, all his politeness no more than what his situation forced upon him. If his sharp eyes seemed

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to gleam with suspicious watchfulness she fancied that her own disturbed imagination put it there.

Alan, however, kept looking at Franz in critical silence, as the German pulled up stools before the fire and threw on pine boughs until the flame leaped up, all the while casting quick glances at his visitors and muttering short phrases of would-be civility, such as, "There, it burns. Draw up, now. The wife will come presently."

Trudchen had answered in her dull, tired voice from the bedroom beyond, but she did not at once appear, but continued to drag her slippered feet back and forth across the floor. Lucy felt very uneasy, for she saw that Alan was in one of his moods of careless imprudence, which, when his thoughtless words or actions led to success, had won him fame and medals, and, when they brought him near disaster, had caused Arthur Leslie to frown over "that silly ass."

Now, forgetting everything but his curiosity, and negligently contemptuous of Franz' feelings, he asked casually enough, standing beside the fire, while Lucy lifted Adelheid to her knees:

"Been to Coblenz, Franz? Selling wood in the city?"

Franz hesitated, really puzzled, Lucy fancied, by Alan's German, but after a little pause he an-

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swered, "Yes, Herr Officer. I go there almost every day with my fagots."

"Into the city, eh? Or to the Rhine?" Alan asked this quite meaninglessly, echoing Franz' words of half an hour back, but the German's eyes lighted with something like alarm as he said haltingly:

"The Rhine? Why should I go there? What does the Herr mean? The road winds along the Moselle, but, once in the city, I sell my goods and return."

"Through the forest? Ever meet anyone there?"

"Alan, please don't," Lucy murmured.

Franz stared at the Britisher, his face set in a look of stolid obstinacy. His lips parted and he moved his head to frame a denial, but before it was spoken he checked himself, forced a pale smile, leaned down to stir the fire, or to compose his countenance, and rising again spoke coolly enough:

"Why, yes, Herr Officer. I suppose you mean the gentleman who comes here sometimes? He is a Herr who often hunts in this forest, and, as I served under him, he sometimes honors me by a little notice."

As he finished this commonplace account the German faced Alan with a kind of dumb defiance,

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as though inwardly he added, "There! What have you got to object to in that?"

Alan, totally unmoved, went on in the same tone of careless inquiry, which, in spite of its low-voiced resemblance to ordinary conversation, would have told any listener that he did not believe a word Franz had said:

"That's very good of him. Not much hunting around here now, I suppose, so he looks you up often?"

Again Franz paused before replying and again Lucy wondered if Alan's German honestly puzzled him. But now the woodcutter listened intently, as though he dared not lose one of the Britisher's words nor fail to answer:

"Yes, *mein Herr*. He comes here sometimes, not so often. I met him in the woods to-day." This last was spoken with an air of conscious candor, as though Alan must now see that he concealed nothing. "As for the hunting, there are rabbits, and a few birds. The gentleman has simple tastes."

"What, the chance of potting rabbits keeps him wandering through these woods day after day? As well tell me he's fallen in love with Adelheid," exclaimed Alan, staring into the German's face with open disbelief.

Franz now showed signs of great uneasiness.

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His lips were pressed together in a sort of angry bewilderment. Whether it was in real alarm or merely that he was obliged to suppress his ill-humor Lucy was uncertain, but she could not endure to sit there any longer and said to Alan with vehemence, "Let's go."

She put Adelheid off her knees and rose just as Trudchen shuffled into the room, wrapped as usual in a ragged shawl over her cotton dress, her hair in flaxen wisps, her face tired, troubled and red-eyed from recent tears.

"Good-day, *gnädige Fräulein*," she said, smiling faintly at Lucy, and giving Alan a short curtsey. "Forgive me for delaying. I have my Friedrich sick and I was putting him in bed."

"I'm sorry. What can I do?" asked Lucy, forgetting Franz.

"Nothing, I thank you. He needs only to be warm and quiet. Will you not sit down?"

"No, we're just going. We came in for a moment to warm ourselves. It's getting late, so we must hurry." Lucy smiled at Adelheid and patted her shoulder, feeling sorry and uncomfortable. "Promise to let me know, Frau, if Friedrich is worse?"

"Yes, many thanks," nodded Trudchen, following Lucy and Alan to the door, Franz silently bringing up the rear.

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Once outside the cottage and walking fast across the twilit clearing, Lucy poured out upon Alan a flood of reproaches. "I don't think you should have talked so, Alan. He offered us hospitality and it was no time to ask questions. If he is innocent you were wrong to insult him."

When Alan could get in a word he said, glancing with some amusement at Lucy's disapproving face, "Look at it from another point of view, Lucy, before you go for me like that. If he is innocent I didn't insult him, for my questions could hold no offense. If he is guilty his villainy—whatever on earth it is—deserves to be ferreted out, even at the cost of making him burn a few extra pine logs or of hurting his wife's feelings. Which is more important, that peace should not be delayed, or that Franz should not be offended?"

"Oh, Alan, how could he delay peace? What an imagination you have!" cried Lucy, exasperated.

"Right-o. If he has no bad intentions then I didn't offend him. So what's the row?"

"It's impossible to argue with you," declared Lucy, silenced against her will.

Once in the hospital she described all the afternoon's events to Bob. When she finished with an account of Alan's questions to Franz, to her satisfaction Bob promptly agreed with her that Alan

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had acted wrongly. However, she learned at her brother's first words that he did not actually share her own view.

"I think you should have held your tongue, Alan," he told the Britisher, staring out, as he spoke, from the hospital window into the shadowy forest. "I'd go any lengths to get the truth out of Franz, but what you did was to rouse his suspicions and discover nothing that will help us at all."

"His suspicions were already aroused," Alan protested. "Otherwise why did he spy on us and invite us in with such false civility?"

"Perhaps he only saw you at the edge of the clearing and, not being sure how far you had wandered in the forest, thought he would make friendly advances and be on the safe side."

"To regain our confidence, you mean, in case we had seen him confabing with his gentleman hunter? What a German idea! How dull he must think us."

"If you'd been a little sharper you'd have said nothing," Bob grumbled. "You've put him on guard against us."

"No, I haven't, he was there before. If I were you I'd insist on learning the truth at once. He can't hold out against you. They've primed him with plausible answers up to a certain point. Be-

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yond that he's muddle-headed and would blurt out anything. Why remain in doubt?"

"Perhaps you're right," Bob admitted after a pause. "It is rather silly to let him bother us. But somehow I don't think it will be easy to find out his secret, whether it's an innocent or a guilty one. His master has a hard hand, I imagine, when his servants fail him."

"Gammon!" scoffed Alan. "Why, I wormed some of it out of him this afternoon in five minutes. I'd have got it all if it hadn't been for Lucy's pleading glances. Don't come to England and tell me you never found out what he's up to, or I'll say I'm not the only silly ass in the family."

CHAPTER VIII

FOR ADELHEID

MADAME DE LA TOUR and Michelle had lodgings in Badheim village, but Miss Webster, after discovering how useful Michelle promptly made herself at the hospital, assigned them a room in the cottage with Lucy and Miss Pearse, in which to pass the night whenever they chose. And they often chose to remain there, so as to spend the evenings with Armand, who, recovering more slowly than Bob and Alan, loved to have his mother and sister to beguile his lonely hours. Thus it happened that Michelle took part in a night's incident soon after Lucy's and Alan's visit to Franz' cottage.

Lucy was roused from the sound, dreamless sleep into which she fell after each hard day's work by a sound of tapping against the window casement beside her cot. She stirred without opening her eyes, for the casement opened outwards, and she vaguely fancied that a branch of the tree shading the window had blown against the pane. But when the sound was sharply repeated she opened her eyes,

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sat up, and turning to the window saw a woman looking in at her.

She had no time for more than a quick start before the woman leaned over the sill, and, the shawl wrapped about her head and shoulders falling apart a little, in the clear moonlight Lucy saw Trudchen's pale, troubled face.

"What is it? Is Friedrich sick again?" Lucy asked hurriedly.

Trudchen put a finger to her lips, glancing toward Miss Pearse's cot, and spoke in an eager whisper.

"Fräulein, forgive me for coming. I need help—and I have nowhere else to go. My little Adelheid is sick now, and I have nothing—I don't know what to do! Kind Fräulein, will you come?"

At the trembling earnestness of her voice Lucy did not even stop to answer. She was out of bed in a second, but before beginning to dress she asked doubtfully, "Shall I be help enough? I'd better call Miss Pearse."

Trudchen leaned in the window to catch her arm as she whispered imploringly, "No, no, Fräulein, only you! Otherwise Franz will be still more angry."

"All right," Lucy nodded, not stopping to argue. Miss Pearse slept heavily after her long hours of work and she did not stir while Lucy

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hastily dressed herself. In ten minutes she stole from the room and met Trudchen in front of the cottage.

“What is the matter with Adelheid?” she asked. “What shall I take with me?”

“She has fever, Fräulein, and she coughs a great deal. She caught cold from Friedrich, and my man sent her on an errand in the forest yesterday, and she lost the path and was late coming home. She was shivering, poor little one, but now she is too warm.——”

“Wait here a minute,” said Lucy.

She went back into the cottage, lit a candle and took from the medicine store-closet the first simple remedies that occurred to her. Then, with a vivid recollection of the poverty of Franz’ cottage, she crept back into her room, took one of the blankets from her cot and, stuffing it under her arm, picked up the other supplies and rejoined Trudchen in the moonlit clearing.

“Come on,” she said softly. “You carry the blanket, please.”

Trudchen took it from her and wrapped it around her own shivering shoulders. She set the pace almost at a run across the open behind the hospital, and into the forest. It was cold, but scarcely any wind moved the tree-tops. The night frost made the snow sparkle with fresh brilliance

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and gave a hoary gleam to the dark pine-trunks. The moonbeams fell between the branches with a checkered silver light by which it was easy to find the way. Owls hooted dismally overhead and invisible beasts scurried off into the shadows.

Trudchen said not a word, absorbed in making all the speed she could. Lucy followed close, suddenly remembering that she should have left a word to explain her absence. In a quarter of an hour they came out into the second clearing and approached the cottage, from which a single candle shone, bright yellow against the clear pallor of snow and moonlight.

Trudchen pushed open the cottage door and entered the kitchen. Red embers glowed on the hearth, before which had been drawn Adelheid's little trundle bed, and beside her on a low stool sat Franz, gloomily staring into the sinking fire.

Trudchen flung off her blanket and shawl, ran to Adelheid and anxiously touched her hot forehead. The child lay motionless with closed eyes, huddled under the ragged blanket. But when her mother said, "See, Adelheid, *leibchen*, the Fräulein is here to help you," she opened her eyes and looking vaguely up at Lucy, smiled faintly and tried to speak, though a fit of coughing put an end to the few whispered words.

Lucy sat down on the stool from which Franz

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had risen, felt Adelheid's quick pulse and touched her swollen tonsils.

"Hold the candle nearer?" she asked Trudchen, and, shivering in the cold room, said to Franz, "Will you put on more wood? Make it as warm as you can."

Mechanically Franz obeyed, throwing on pine-boughs which sent quick flames darting up the chimney, though the room remained cold, penetrated by draughts from between the logs which made the candle-flame veer in every direction.

Lucy covered Adelheid with the blanket she had brought, gave her a quinine tablet, painted her throat with iodine, wound a compress around her neck and put a beer-bottle filled with hot water at her feet. Franz moved about the room, silent and inscrutable as ever. Trudchen ran where Lucy bade her, or else knelt by Adelheid's little bed, her anxious eyes never leaving the child's face.

Adelheid had gone off into an uneasy *do* which began to be troubled by feverish dreams, and presently she tried to talk, painfully in her hoarse, choked voice.

"Hush, Adelheid, don't talk," Lucy coaxed her, but she paid no heed, tossing about on her narrow bed, as though living again the troubled moments whose memory possessed her little brain.

"Yes, Papachen, I'm going. I'll run all the

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way, so 'don't be angry," she cried, panting for breath as she spoke and struggling against the cough that mastered her at every moment. Franz stopped his aimless walk and stared at her. Adelheid went on, now half to herself:

"It's cold, and I don't know where I am. Oh, I wish I could see the clearing! It's awfully big—the forest. But I'll go, Papachen, I'll go all the way. I'll tell him what you said. I'll tell him you will go to the river without fail ——"

"Be silent, Adelheid!" commanded Franz, towering above the child, who shrank back at the harsh voice, staring dazedly up into her father's face.

Then eagerly she continued, "I did it, Papachen. I went there, though I was tired and very cold. I told Herr Johann ——"

"Be quiet!" Franz grasped Adelheid's little shoulder, speaking the stern words close to her ear.

Trudchen gave a quick sob. "Franz, she is ill, poor little one," she whispered.

Franz took away his heavy hand, then, as though ashamed of his roughness, he smoothed Adelheid's tumbled hair and pulled the blanket up about her chin. He cast an odd look at Lucy, in which hostility at her presence contended with a kind of gratitude.

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“Tell me, Fräulein,” Trudchen whispered, “will she be very ill?”

“I don’t think so,” Lucy reassured her. “I don’t think she has anything worse than a bad cold. How long was she out in the forest yesterday?”

“About—two hours,” said Trudchen, glancing fearfully at Franz.

He had left the hearth as Adelheid relapsed into silence, and was looking from the window which opened on the farther side of the clearing. He paid no heed to his wife’s words for at that moment all his attention seemed taken up by something outside. He started, hesitated, then walked quickly to the front and went outdoors.

Lucy was feeling of Adelheid’s pulse again and trying to guess how much fever she had, for she had forgotten to bring a thermometer and there was no watch in the cottage. In a moment she was roused by hearing footsteps in the bedroom beyond, and the low sound of men’s voices. She could hear Franz speaking in a cautious whisper to someone, and one of the little boys crying out at being awakened. The footsteps at once recrossed the floor to the back, and the shed-door was creakily opened, as though Franz had taken his midnight visitor to its safer shelter.

Exasperated at this continued mystery, Lucy

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glanced at Trudchen, who was looking with keenest anxiety toward the bedroom door.

"Your husband has visitors at funny hours," said Lucy, unable to contain herself.

Trudchen turned, her pale face and unhappy eyes raised to Lucy in a kind of silent appeal. To Lucy her face seemed to say, "I can't explain—don't ask me." But in a minute she apparently felt the need of saying something, and she spoke dully, as though she had rehearsed the words.

"It is nothing, Fräulein. Franz has to sell wood far and near, and often people come in the night because they are passing through the forest. Some of them do not like to be about too much by daylight. Germans who fear the Americans are not friendly."

"If their business is honest they ought to know the Americans won't hurt them," said Lucy, unsatisfied not so much at Trudchen's words as at the halting manner in which they were spoken. She began to feel a new sympathy for Alan's inquisitiveness. However, without waiting for an answer which she could not believe, she added, "I'm going back now, to the hospital. I'll come early in the morning and bring some things she needs. There's no danger; don't be frightened."

In spite of everything she felt so sorry for Trudchen's evident misery that she put her hand on the

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German woman's arm and did her best to comfort her.

"Thank you, thank you, kind Fräulein," cried Trudchen, following Lucy to the door, gratitude throbbing in her voice. "Are you not afraid to go alone through the forest? Will you wait and let—Franz ——"

"Oh, no, I'm not a bit afraid," declared Lucy, disdaining the proffered escort. "I'll be back in a few hours, remember."

She closed the cottage door softly after her and ran across the clearing. As she entered the forest, light steps sounded on the snow and Michelle came running through the trees to meet her.

"Michelle! What's the matter?" Lucy demanded.

"Nothing is the matter, except with you, *mon amie*," said Michelle, panting. "I heard you stealing out and saw you walking across the hospital clearing with Franz' wife. I followed you."

"What on earth for?" asked Lucy, but at the same time she caught her friend's arm in hers gratefully, for the night forest was lonely in its cold shadowy depths.

"To help you if I could. Why did you go to Franz' cottage?"

"To see Adelheid. She's sick, poor little

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thing. And oh, Michelle, someone came to see Franz ——”

She paused, turning back to the cottage clearing. The shed-door had swung closed again and now a tall, quick-moving figure came out into the moonlight and walked toward the far side of the clearing.

“Herr Johann!” Michelle said in amazement.

“Yes, it’s he who was in the cottage. It’s he Adelheid was sent to talk with yesterday. Michelle, if we could find out where he goes now!”

Lucy’s suggestion was scarcely more than a spoken wish. She expected Michelle’s instant disapproval, for in the old days at Château-Plessis the French girl had often dissuaded her from foolhardy exploits and counselled the patience war’s perils had taught. But now Michelle seemed to feel differently. They were on German soil, it was true, but not under German rule. Lucy saw her blue eyes flash in the moonlight as her glance followed Herr Johann on his hurried way into the forest. She caught Lucy’s arm closer in hers, saying breathlessly:

“Let us follow him, Lucy! Surely the way he goes must teach us something.”

Lucy’s devouring curiosity at this fresh proof of the forest mystery swept away her lingering fear.

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With Michelle beside her she was ready for adventure. Her longing was so great to know at last the answer to the riddle, she drew Michelle almost at a run through the fringe of fir-trees, along the same path by which she and Alan had stalked the Germans a few days before.

The girls did not say a word as they hurried around the clearing, their quick breath white in the frosty moonlight, their cautious steps making little sound upon the snow. Herr Johann walked fast, for when they reached the point at which he had entered the forest he had already disappeared. They paused uncertainly, with an uncomfortable feeling that from behind one of the low-branched fir-trees he might be watching them.

"He's gone. Shall we go on?" whispered Lucy, suddenly weakening.

"He cannot be far ahead, though," Michelle answered in the same hushed tone. "Let us go on a little."

They crept between the trees, looking from right to left, and fancying they saw the German's figure beside every shadowy tree-trunk, and in every shade of swaying pine-boughs against moonlit snow. There were footprints in the snow in front of them but it was hard to tell if they were new or old. Lucy tried to remember the way she and Alan had followed, but the forest held few landmarks to

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a stranger and she soon lost all definite sense of direction.

"I think we're idiots. We can't find him," she said to Michelle after another quarter of a mile. "Yet I hate to give up."

"Shall we go a little further?" proposed Michelle, doubtfully. "I thought I heard a step."

At the same moment Lucy, too, caught the slight, crunching noise of a man's boot on the snow, a little on their right. Her heart gave a quick, hard throb and all her eager curiosity returned, driving away her creeping dread of the lonely night forest.

"Don't make a sound," she breathed in Michelle's ear.

Michelle, not needing the warning, was stealing lightly as a ghost in the direction of the footsteps, which now sounded nearer, as Herr Johann walked quickly on, unsuspecting of intruders on his midnight journey.

The girls dared not approach too near, pausing in affright every time a twig cracked beneath their feet or an owl hooted above their heads. They kept in sound, but not in sight of their quarry. In another ten minutes the footsteps turned sharply to the left and quickened speed. Lucy and Michelle crossed the road along which Franz had driven his cart, and went on for another mile until the forest

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began to thin a little, and slender birch-trees to mix with the firs and hemlocks. All at once the footsteps ahead of them stopped short.

The trackers stopped, too, trying to see the man in front of them. Inch by inch they crept nearer, hiding behind broad fir-boughs and peeping out between them, until they could see the trees thinned almost to a clearing around a tiny, gabled woodland cottage, a German hunter's lodge. At the threshold stood Herr Johann, fumbling in his pocket for the key which he now produced and fitted in the door.

As he turned the lock he rapped on the door with his free hand and shouted, "Ludwig!"

Lucy and Michelle trembled, half expecting Ludwig to appear from among the trees around them. Herr Johann lingered on the threshold, casting piercing glances about the woodland. A light which had shone in the back window of the lodge was now moved rapidly forward, flickering and dancing as though a man were running with a candle in his hand. A man appeared in the lighted doorway. Herr Johann's words, as he greeted him, were lost in the closing door. Silence re-descended upon the forest and the two girls behind the fir-tree clutched each other and exchanged meaning glances.

"What now?" Lucy whispered. "Shall we

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stay? Oh, Michelle, I think perhaps after all it's true that he's only a hunter, with a queer taste for living in the winter forest."

"Perhaps," said Michelle doubtfully. As she spoke she suddenly pressed Lucy's arm again, pointing to the trees beyond the lodge. A third man appeared, walking quickly toward the door, dressed, like Herr Johann, in hunting costume and wearing, like him, an air of conscious importance.

He drew a key from his pocket and let himself in. At this evidence of a prearranged meeting Lucy's anger flared up hotly. She felt a real fury against these Germans who were stealing her peace of mind and prolonging the nightmare of war and conspiracy from which she hoped to have awakened.

"Michelle, let's wait," she said with dogged resolution. "I must see what happens."

Michelle was staring toward the door, lost in thought. "It is a rendezvous," she said at last. "If we could only hear them."

The small, leaded windows of the lodge had red curtains drawn across them, behind which the candle-light softly shone. "If we could creep up and listen," Lucy suggested, now in one of her rare moods of daring, when fear or anger got the better of prudence, "they couldn't see us."

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"Very well," Michelle agreed, after a moment's hesitation.

"After all, they dare not hurt us, even if we are discovered," said Lucy, abandoning the fir-tree's shelter.

They crept up to the lodge and crouched in the snow beneath the nearest window. Voices sounded within, like two men arguing together, then Herr Johann, or so Lucy guessed, spoke alone, as though giving orders. Cries of "*Ja! Ja!*" filled the pause after he finished speaking. Chairs were pushed back, and the two girls started up to flee into the shadows, but the noise of a table dragged over the floor and of chairs pulled up to it told them that some sort of inspection or consultation had commenced. The mellow light shone a little brighter, as though a second candle had been lighted, and Herr Johann began talking again.

Lucy could not hear what he said, and, as she strained her ears, almost unconsciously she raised herself close beside the window, leaning her shoulder against the rough logs of the frame. Herr Johann spoke fast and steadily. For all her efforts Lucy could make out no more than disjointed words:

"Here you are. Look well. Ten miles. For you, Ludwig."

Then to a question put by another voice he

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responded, "That's it. Day after to-morrow."

Lucy dropped to the snow again to ask of Michelle, listening with equal intentness at the other side of the casement, "Can you understand them?"

Michelle shook her head. "Very little. I think they are looking at a map or plan or something of that sort."

They strained their ears once more. Now bottles clinked and it was plain that a glass of beer was cheering the night conference. It was cold standing in the snow, with the frosty breath of the pines blown against them, and Lucy and Michelle shivered and moved their cold, cramped limbs in weary discouragement, as a long half hour crept by. Not a single revealing sentence could they catch from the steady talk within, and the few fragments they heard told them no more than that the three men were planning something that involved time, distance, and secrecy.

When the listeners' patience was exhausted and by glances exchanged they had agreed to retreat, the talk within suddenly died down to monosyllables, chairs grated and footsteps crossed the floor. With one accord Lucy and Michelle fled back into the forest's shelter, but, scarcely a dozen yards from the door of the lodge, they hid behind the

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evergreen branches and breathlessly watched for the men to come out.

Herr Johann came first, in about ten minutes. He stepped over the threshold pulling on his gloves, his Alpine cap cocked on one side, a look of satisfaction on his arrogant features. The man who had last entered the lodge followed him, and the two exchanged a handshake on the door-step, while Herr Johann said heartily:

“Until we meet again! May all go well.”

“As well as these black times permit,” responded the other, somewhat despondently.

To this Herr Johann protested with commanding energy, “Ach, what talk is that? We shall snatch something from ruin, if it is no more than to see those ——”

The rest of the phrase was lost to Lucy's and Michelle's ears as the two men walked straight ahead of the lodge toward the forest. At the edge of the woodland they paused and shook hands again. Then Herr Johann went on into the wood, the second man turned back, and, passing close to where the listeners were hidden, walked quickly on over the moonlit snow between the trees until his steps were lost in the forest.

At his nearness Lucy and Michelle had almost stopped breathing to shrink back among the fir-tree's branches. But, once the danger past, they

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looked out again as a key rattled in the lodge door and the man called Ludwig came out, having left all dark within. He was wrapped in a rough jacket and wore a woolen cap. His feet were covered with heavy boots and he walked stoopingly. Lucy wondered if he were not the companion of Herr Johann's former visit to Franz' cottage, and tried to get a glimpse of his face. But he kept it bent over the lock, which he tried again and again to make sure it was fast before he left the doorstep. Then, thrusting his bare hands into his pockets, he strode off, head bent, at his slow, awkward gait, and in turn disappeared into the forest.

"Wait a minute and give them time to get away," said Michelle, still whispering from lingering uneasiness. "I do not at all want to meet any of them."

Lucy waited but an instant before she left her shelter and ran toward the lodge door. She felt of the strong padlock and pulled at it, but in vain.

"If their secrets are inside, that's easy," she said to Michelle, who had followed her. "Bob will come here to-morrow and break the place open. Who won the war, anyhow?"

Michelle smiled in the moonlight, swinging her arms across her chest, for she was cold. "If they are so simple as to leave their secrets in this lodge we have little to fear from them," she said. "I

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think this place is no more than a rendezvous, well hidden from sight."

"Then why was that Ludwig so anxious about locking the door?"

"He was told to lock the door, and as he is afraid of Herr Johann, he obeyed with great care. To look at him, he is one of those Germans who does not think much for himself."

Lucy tried vainly to see through the red-curtained windows, prowling restlessly about the lodge, which was no more than a big log-cabin, with the decoration of gables and leaded windows.

"Come, Lucy, what more is there to see?" asked Michelle, turning back to the forest.

Lucy followed reluctantly, exasperated by the teasing uncertainty which made her mind swing back and forth between unanswerable questions. As she walked away from the lodge she caught sight of a slip of paper lying on the snow in front of her. She picked it up and stopped in the moonlight to study it.

"Michelle, look here," she said, her heart suddenly beating faster. "One of them dropped this. Oh, how hard German is to read."

Michelle looked over her shoulder and together they began spelling out the sentences scribbled on the paper, which was a page roughly torn from a

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small note-book, covered with inky memoranda. It ran as follows:

Saw woodcutter Kraft of Badheim	26
Saw farmer Vogel of Mainz	14
Saw tanner Schwartz of Koenigsberg	34
Saw woodcutter Zimmermann of Feldheim	22
Saw brewer Helmuth Hauff of Weibund	11

Lucy and Michelle managed to decipher every word, but when they had finished they could only reread the scribbled page, at a loss to understand its meaning. What had these various trades of common interest? Or common mystery?

“ ‘Saw woodcutter Kraft’—that’s Franz,” murmured Lucy, frowning. “ ‘Saw farmer Vogel’—But for what, Michelle? 26—14—Oh, can’t you think what he means?”

Michelle shook her head. “Let us look carefully around,” she proposed, “in case he let fall another piece.”

But this was quite in vain. They gave up the search in a quarter of an hour and began the journey back to the hospital, suddenly aware that they had been absent nearly two hours, and that it must be almost three o’clock in the morning.

The moon was setting when, after more than once losing the path, they reached Franz’ clearing and familiar ground. Franz’ cart was already har-

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nessed beside the shed for his early start, and his dim figure moved beside it. Too tired to talk over the night's strange events, Lucy and Michelle hurried on to the hospital, crept into the cottage and regained their beds.

But Lucy could not sleep, tired as she was. She lay staring out of the window through which Trudchen had leaned to summon her for Adelheid, and her restless spirit could hardly wait for daylight to tell Bob all she had seen.

At the first light of dawn she was up and dressed. Miss Pearse woke to question her and Lucy told of Trudchen's coming and of Adelheid's illness, reserving for another time the history of what followed.

"I'm going back now, Miss Pearse," she explained, "for Adelheid may be worse, and I promised to go."

"Wait a minute and I'll make you some tea and toast," said Miss Pearse, shivering in her thick wrapper as she lighted the alcohol lamp and filled the kettle. "Why, Lucy, how long were you out there last night? You look pale and tired. Let me go back in your place."

"Oh, no. I'm all right. You have enough to do," said Lucy, yawning and rubbing her heavy eyes. "I need a lot of sleep. I wouldn't be much good as a nurse."

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She drank the tea and ate the toast thankfully, and putting on her warmest clothes, walked fast all the way to Franz' cottage to stir her blood, chilled by the cold, foggy morning air. The sun was rising as she crossed the clearing. Trudchen met her at the cottage door with a welcoming smile that illumined her thin, anxious face.

"Adelheid is no worse, Fräulein," she said at once. "She has slept, but her throat still hurts her. You are good to come."

Lucy entered the cottage more willingly because she knew Franz was not there. The fagots strewn about the snow showed where he had taken up his load from among the neat piles of wood that dotted the clearing.

Lucy's mind was so filled with the meeting in the forest, with the meaningless words of the lost memoranda, and with Franz' unknown but undoubted connection with all this mystery that she could hardly put her thoughts on what she had come for, or think of Adelheid apart from Franz and his suspected treachery. The cottage was hateful to her, even Trudchen's patient, unhappy face inspired no confidence, and it was only at sight of Adelheid herself that the first touch of sympathy warmed her cold suspicion.

"Fräulein, welcome!" whispered the child from her sore, swollen throat, and her flushed little face

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lighted at sight of her friend as she raised one arm shakily from beneath the blanket to catch Lucy's hand.

Lucy bent over and stroked her hot forehead, forgetful of German scheming.

"See, Adelheid, I have brought you some milk," she said. "And if you are a good girl and drink it all I will give you something nicer." She turned to Trudchen at sound of the little boys' footsteps in the bedroom. "They had better not come near their sister. Go in to them, if you want to. I'll stay a while with Adelheid." Something more than usually troubled in Trudchen's eyes made her add reassuringly, "Don't be anxious about Adelheid. She's a lot better already."

"No, no, Fräulein, I am not afraid for her now," declared Trudchen, trying to smile, but as she spoke her voice trembled and involuntarily she cast a glance from the window across the clearing, where the snow now began to glitter beneath the first rays of the sun.

"Is she afraid Franz will come back and find me here, or what is it?" Lucy asked herself with nervous irritation. "Oh, I can't wait to tell it all to Bob!"

CHAPTER IX

BOB AND ELIZABETH

THE result of Lucy's talk with her brother was that Bob repeated the whole to his father when he visited General Gordon's house in Coblenz the day after Adelheid's illness. General Gordon was so busy with the establishment of order in the Rhineland and the disposition of troops and staff that Bob felt he listened with but one ear to his revelations. And in spite of Bob's certainty that something was decidedly wrong in Franz' behavior he realized that, as he told it, the facts sounded meagre and unconvincing.

"What is it you suspect the man of—stirring up rebellion? There are rumors of disaffection about here—some clash between the Rhineland and the German government," said General Gordon, looking over the papers on his desk as he spoke.

"I don't exactly suspect him of that, or of anything," said Bob uncertainly. "But it's evident that he's conspiring, and oughtn't we to know what about?"

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"Yes, if he really is. But, after all, what have you proved? That he meets friends clandestinely in the forest ——"

"Not friends, Father. Herr Johann is his master and he obeys him."

"They can't be hatching very much mischief in that little spot."

"Perhaps not, but the paper I showed you? Doesn't that suggest that it's a wide-spread movement and that Franz is but one agent?"

Bob pushed before his father's eyes the scribbled page Lucy had picked up. General Gordon reread it, studying it thoughtfully. "It's certainly a plan of some sort," he said. "I wonder if this precious Herr Johann isn't cornering the food-market to make a fortune."

"I thought of that," admitted Bob. "But would he need quite so much secrecy?"

"If I were you," General Gordon suggested, still looking at the slip of paper, "I would go directly to Franz or to the other fellow. Tell them plainly that you are on to them and that they would best give up their little scheme, as it can only end in failure. That if they own up now you won't proceed against them. We have so obviously the upper hand they can't hold out."

"I'll do it," said Bob, getting up. "Franz isn't clever enough for much deception. Alan insists he

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could have found out his secret the other day if Lucy hadn't dissuaded him."

"How did Alan get off? Was he in pretty fair shape?"

"Yes, and being homeward bound he won't know when he's tired. I never saw anyone so delighted. He limps a little, but otherwise he's as well as ever."

"How about yourself, Bob? You still look thin. Remember you're here to convalesce, and don't let Franz disturb you too much. Why not let Eaton take over the job? He's quite willing."

"I'll have a try at it myself, anyway. Larry's got a lot to do and I have nothing. I feel perfectly well, Dad. My leg's a bit stiff at times, nothing worse."

"Tell Lucy to stay in bed nights and not scour the countryside, will you?" General Gordon called after his son as Bob neared the door. "I wish I'd sent her to England, too."

Bob lost no time in putting into practice his father's suggestion, for direct action exactly suited his impatient nature. He started out that afternoon for the woodcutter's cottage, without saying anything more to Lucy than that he was going for a stroll in the forest. He thought of asking Armand de la Tour to go with him, but on considering decided that Franz might feel more inclined to

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frankness if an American officer were his only inquisitor.

At first he walked as fast as his mended leg would allow, but in a few minutes the beauty of the afternoon sunlight sifting through the forest trees and the pleasant cold air blowing against his face made him slacken speed and dawdle a little, rejoicing in his recovered health and energy. The bitter Arctic winter, and all he had suffered in the frozen North, seemed far away. He thought to himself, with a burst of joyful optimism, that the war was gloriously won, and that Franz' little plottings were, after all, hardly worth bothering about.

But, although he loitered, the clearing appeared before long in sight and, looking at Franz' cottage, he remembered his doubts and his present mission. He crossed the clearing and knocked at the cottage door.

Men's voices sounded inside, speaking in quick, low tones. There was a short pause, then shuffled steps approached the door and Trudchen opened it a few inches, looking apprehensively into Bob's face. She did not even smile or curtsy, but her painful agitation held no surprise. It was evident that Bob had been seen crossing the clearing.

"Good-day, Frau," said he. "Where is your husband?"

Trudchen hesitated, glancing back into the room,

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but Bob waited for no refusal. He pushed open the door and faced Franz and Herr Johann, who stood before the fire staring at him, Franz in open-mouthed dismay, Herr Johann with a scowl on his proud, handsome face.

“Franz, I have something to say to you,” said Bob to the woodcutter. “And I think it may also interest this Herr,” he added, nodding toward the other, who was listening in silent intentness.

Franz looked doubtfully at Herr Johann, who answered with calm surprise, “And what may it be, Herr Captain? We are at your service. Franz, thou donkey, canst thou not offer the Herr Captain a seat by the fire?”

Thus reminded of his duty Franz hastily pulled forward a stool and made Bob his awkward bow. The two Germans remained standing, waiting for Bob to sit down. Trudchen had retreated into the farther room, but, through the open door, Bob fancied her eagerly listening.

He did not take the proffered stool, but plunged at once into speech, looking at Herr Johann, who was so evidently master, rather than at Franz, who stole sly glances at his chief, as though undecided how he should behave.

“You must know, *mein Herr*, and Franz, too, that your conduct in the past weeks has laid you open to grave suspicion. I came here to tell you

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frankly that secret meetings in the forest at midnight and other peculiar acts cannot pass unobserved. Such conspiracy, if for the purpose of inciting revolt, is doomed to failure. I have already reported my observations to our commander at Coblenz."

Bob put this into his best German, which was none too good. It was good enough, though, to cause Herr Johann's proud face to flush and his eyes to glow with suppressed anger. He pressed his thin lips sharply together and looked no less than hate at the young American who coolly took him to task. But he said not a word until he could command himself, and when he did speak his voice was steady and held nothing but astonishment, and the faint scorn with which an innocent man replies to base accusations.

"It is hard for me to answer you, Herr Captain, not knowing precisely of what I am accused. Is it of fostering rebellion in the Rhineland? If you knew me"—he said this as if Bob's ignorance was unlimited—"you would know that I am a Prussian and can have no sympathy with this revolting province. As for Franz, he is an Alsatian. Why should he make common cause with Rhinelanders?"

Bob glanced at the woodcutter, who stood sour-faced and stolid as ever, something of the dumb un-

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happiness that possessed Trudchen clinging to his dull presence. Bob said to Herr Johann:

“ I have not accused you of conspiracy. I only ask an explanation of actions that are certainly suspicious. What reason can you give for spending hours in a woodcutter’s cabin? Why should you give midnight rendezvous in a hunter’s lodge in the forest? Why are you here as a hunter in the dead of winter? ”

As Bob’s knowledge of his movements were thus revealed to him, Herr Johann’s eyes gleamed oddly for an instant with a surprise but imperfectly concealed, but he remained untroubled, and answered readily and even with awakening good-humor:

“ But, Herr Captain, you have disturbed yourself to no purpose. The explanation is so simple.”

“ Then why could not Franz or his wife give it? ” Bob interposed.

“ Franz? ” Herr Johann glanced at the woodcutter, as though puzzling over Bob’s words. Then he said tolerantly, speaking of Franz as though he were deaf and blind, “ Why, Herr Captain, the woodcutter is a poor, simple fellow, who has learned caution in the war’s hard school when we Germans were surrounded by enemies. He hesitated to talk without my consent, of my business. Do not bear him a grudge for his faithfulness.”

Impatiently Bob sought to brush away this cur-

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tain of useless words and get at the facts that lay behind. But Herr Johann's calm courtesy was more impenetrable than anger.

"I don't see why Franz could not have mentioned his business with you," he objected. "Why such secrecy? Unless it is indeed a doubtful business which you steal through the forest at night to transact."

He spoke warmly, hoping to stir Herr Johann from his watchful politeness, but the German answered coolly as ever:

"You mean at my little hunting-lodge? You suspect that of harboring guilty secrets? Herr Captain, come with me now and inspect it at your leisure. Or I will give you the key and you can go when you please."

"How about this?" asked Bob, pulling from his pocket the memoranda Lucy had picked up and holding it before Herr Johann's eyes.

The German took it from him and examined it with such slow intentness that Bob could only imagine he was planning a plausible reply. Franz had flashed a startled look into his employer's face, but seeing Herr Johann calm as before, he let fall his gaze again, turned to throw wood on the fire and stood slowly rubbing the bark from his big hands.

In a minute Herr Johann spoke, in his quiet,

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well-bred voice. "I could not make this out at first," he explained. "You picked it up somewhere? I fancy it must have been dropped by a farmer passing through the forest. It seems to be a list of places he visited with his supplies. For instance, to woodcutter Zimmermann at Feldheim—that's ten miles north of here—he left such and such produce. Franz, thy name is here. Dost thou buy thy cabbages from a Badheim farmer?"

Franz, after a quick glance into Herr Johann's face, nodded. Herr Johann turned to Bob and, as though with a sudden recollection of the American's suspicions, asked:

"You did not see conspiracy in this?"

Bob felt baffled, hot and angry. He began to feel that his proofs were insufficient, and, though he was no less than before convinced of Herr Johann's duplicity, it was hard, in his labored German, to win any battle of words against his wily antagonist.

"Have you any objection to telling me plainly what your business is with Franz?" he asked, taking back the slip of paper. "Are you in the habit of wandering about the forest in winter?"

Herr Johann gave a faint, mocking laugh, more at himself than at Bob. "Why, no, Herr Captain, nor am I in the habit of living as I live now. The war has changed the world for such as I. My

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name is von Eckhardt. I am of Berlin, but since the armistice I have lived in and near Coblenz, trying to help our stricken Fatherland rebuild itself. I have some influence with our people—ex-soldiers such as this Franz—and I urge them to courage and unity. Do our conquerors object to patriotism in Germany?”

There was something of a hidden sneer in Herr Johann's last words and Bob felt himself flushing as he answered, with more roughness than he had heretofore allowed himself, “I do not understand how Germany is served by meeting farmers and woodcutters at midnight.”

“And do you know, Herr Captain, that reunions are forbidden in Coblenz?” demanded the German.

Bob opened his lips to ask what took place at the reunions that were to serve the new Germany so well, but something checked him to silence. He felt that Herr Johann had an answer to everything and that questions were entirely useless. The German could advance the best of motives for his secret meetings and Bob was not yet in a position to contradict him. At that moment Bob, too simple and direct by nature to unravel a tangle of falsehood, longed for Alan's careless, defiant tongue to fling challenges at Herr Johann which would make the cautious Prussian lose his temper and forget to play his part.

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Herr Johann read something of Bob's angry disbelief in his face, for with a deprecating sort of gesture he said regretfully, "I am sorry that the Herr Captain is not convinced. What can I do to satisfy him?"

"Nothing at all. Good-day," said Bob, turning on his heel, disgusted at himself, at Herr Johann, at the doubts which must continue to trouble him when all should have been peaceful serenity.

He walked to the door, let himself out and recrossed the clearing. In his keen annoyance his one consolation was the certainty that he had left both Germans still more uncomfortable. The Prussian's calm glibness had deceived him not at all. His answers were good enough to stifle questioning, but not to put suspicion to sleep.

"I'm not quite the fool he thinks me," he remarked to himself, as he picked up a pine-cone and tossed it at a squirrel frisking and chattering above his head. "Scat, you German beast," he said moodily. "I don't believe a word you're saying."

Bob told Lucy nothing of his visit to Franz' cottage, so dissatisfied was he with its result. Instead, he went again the following day to Coblenz to look up Larry, who was off at work somewhere and could not be found. Bob went on to his father's house in search of Elizabeth. He had de-

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terminated to tell her a part of the forest mystery and ask her opinion of its importance, so highly did both he and Lucy value the little German woman's sense and judgment.

"She understands Germans better than we do," Bob thought, as he reached the door-step, "and she may know what they are thinking and feeling better than our General Staff, with daily reports from every city in the occupied territory."

But here again he was disappointed, for the door was opened by an orderly who told him that Elizabeth had gone out half an hour before. Bob was surprised, for it was about three in the afternoon, an hour when he had never known Elizabeth to be absent. He went into the house and in his father's office at the rear found Sergeant Cameron.

At sight of his old friend for a moment he forgot his anxieties and, dropping down into a chair, plunged into talk of days gone by. He had not yet tired of reviewing his prison days—to Bob hardest of all the war's ordeals—with the old non-com, and the latter could never stop marvelling over how Bob had freed him in the nick of time from German captivity. There was such a bond between the two as neither time nor absence could break.

"And now, sir, it's over and all's well again," remarked the sergeant, a smile of satisfaction on his

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lean, tanned face as he glanced from the window into the street of the German city.

"I hope so," said Bob soberly, reminded of his errand. "I wish peace were signed and we were out of here."

"They talk about revolts in Germany," admitted Sergeant Cameron. "It was bad, you said, sir, in Berlin? And things look a bit uncertain here. But what's the odds, after all? Let them fight if they choose. We'll soon be quit of them."

Bob saw that his old friend's composure was too assured to be easily upset. For him the war was over and that ended it. Bob fancied he knew now why Lucy, in her troubled moments, loved to come and talk with Sergeant Cameron.

"Well, good-bye, Cameron, I must be off," he said, getting up. "I wonder where Elizabeth went. I want to see her."

"Don't know, sir. She told me she had an errand and would be gone about an hour. It isn't often she asks leave, so I thought the General wouldn't have no objections."

"Oh, no," agreed Bob.

He went out thoughtfully and recrossed the dozen blocks to the house where Larry was billeted. This time he found him just entering.

"Good luck, Bob!" exclaimed Larry, catching his friend's arm. "Are you coming to see me?"

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How's your leg? Will you walk a few more blocks so that I can leave this report at Colonel Wigmore's? I'll finish up now so as to have all the time you want."

"I feel a lazy dog when I see you working," said Bob as they walked off together. "I'm perfectly well. I don't see why I haven't been dismissed from the hospital."

"Don't hurry them, for they'll be sure to send you far off somewhere. You're not really well yet, anyhow. The fellow out at the hospital told me you couldn't stand exposure. Besides, aren't you at work at Badheim? How's the puzzler coming on?"

"Badly," said Bob. "I had a talk to-day with Franz and Herr Johann. They have an answer for everything."

"What, for the meeting in the lodge and the slip of paper?"

"All of it. Never saw such smoothness. Do you know, I think I'll tell Elizabeth about it. When she helped us in Château-Plessis I saw how well she understands her own people. What do you think of asking her what she makes of it? I can't get Father much interested; he's too busy."

"Well, if you want Elizabeth, there she is," said Larry, nodding down the street. "She seems in a hurry. I never saw her out in the city before."

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"That's funny," said Bob, staring at the little figure which he now caught sight of hurrying ahead of them, threading as rapid a way as possible through the crowded street. "She can't be going to the Markt Platz this way, or at this hour."

"Going to see a friend, perhaps," Larry suggested. "They're her countrymen after all."

"Here we are at Colonel Wigmore's," said Bob, as they neared a dwelling-house set somewhat back in a snow-covered garden. "I'll wait outside for you."

Larry hesitated a second then said decidedly, "I thought you wanted to see Elizabeth, Bob. Let's follow her. Where's she going, anyhow?"

"Why, I don't know. But I'm not going to spy on Elizabeth."

"It's not spying. If she's trustworthy she has nothing to hide. You came to Coblenz to see her, and you may not come again for several days. Why miss the chance?"

As Larry finished speaking he ran to the door of the colonel's house, left his report with the orderly and was back in a minute at Bob's side and had caught his arm. "We'll lose sight of her—come on. She can't be going far."

Elizabeth had, in fact, already disappeared, but as the two young men walked quickly on they soon caught sight of her again, just as she turned a cor-

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ner and started down another street, this time in the direction of the city's outskirts and the river.

Bob was really anxious to see her and Larry's argument sounded reasonable enough, but he had a feeling that Larry had begun to suspect Elizabeth of something treacherous or underhanded and, incensed at this idea, he protested, as they followed the German woman's trail:

"Elizabeth has only one desire now, to get back to America. She was pro-Ally before we were in sight of victory. Let's catch up with her, Larry. She won't mind, and we can talk with her as we go along."

But, either Larry was afraid of Bob's tiring his leg or he did not want to overtake Elizabeth, for he so slightly pressed the pace that they remained a dozen yards behind her when, in ten minutes more, she came out into a tree-bordered lane near the town's edge, ending in a park-like walk along the Rhine Embankment. Now, in the dead of winter, the open place with its snow-covered ground and bare-branched trees was quite deserted. A cold wind blew from across the Rhine, and the sky looked cloudy and threatening as twilight began to fall.

Elizabeth glanced sharply about her as though in search of someone. Bob and Larry, by silent agreement, paused in the shadow of a house and

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watched her, Bob with unlimited amazement. She made no attempt to conceal herself as she walked near the river, looking down the sloping banks at the broad-flowing current. Then, shivering, she drew her shawl closer, turning impatiently at every few seconds.

Bob suddenly explained her behavior to himself and said to Larry, with scorn at his own bewilderment, "Why, she's only come here to meet a friend, and take a little walk. What else could it be? I'm going to speak to her."

As he stepped from the sidewalk to cross the snow, a man appeared, hurrying out from a near-by street, his hands thrust in his jacket pockets, something awkward and sullen about his gait and bearing.

Bob stopped short in his tracks and held his breath. "Franz!" he said aloud.

"Come back into this doorway. Don't let them see you," begged Larry, tugging at his sleeve.

Elizabeth and Franz were not noticing them. They were standing engaged in earnest conversation. Elizabeth's face was raised in a kind of pleading, while Franz spoke volubly, with gestures which seemed to mark at one moment the river before them, at others the necessity for compliance with whatever he urged or commanded.

Bob stood motionless in the shadow of the door-

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way, his mind whirling as he searched for some reason for Elizabeth's conduct. An explanation there must be. He would not and could not accuse her of treachery, and he felt indignant with Larry for his evident suspicions.

"I wouldn't go out at all now, Bob. Let's follow them back. You take one and I the other," Larry murmured.

"She's doing nothing wrong," Bob protested hotly. "I tell you I know her. We don't understand, that's all."

"No, I certainly don't," agreed Larry. "What part of Germany is she from, do you know?"

"Bavaria."

"She'd have no interest in the Rhineland revolt, I suppose. By the way, Bob, we have bad reports of the spread of Bolshevism. The Bolshies are doing their best to scrap Germany, and some Germans would rather have it scrapped if they could scrap the Allies with it. Hello, the conference is over. What now, Bob?"

Franz turned on his heel and, making off across the snow, disappeared down the first street he came to. The twilight had deepened and, along the river, lights had sprung up and shone against the pearl-grey dusk. Elizabeth wrapped her shawl closer, stood a moment staring at the river, then faced about quickly, as though remembering her

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neglected duty, and came directly toward the spot where Bob and Larry were concealed.

She passed right in front of them, head bent and eyes on the ground. The street was empty and almost dark. Bob sprang from the sheltering doorway and in a dozen steps caught up with her, Larry at his heels.

"Elizabeth," he said, touching her arm.

She turned and faced him, panting from her hurried walk, her thin cheeks pale in spite of the keen wind, and her dark eyes strangely troubled. At sight of Bob her glance softened, and, though there was something of uneasy hesitation in her voice, she smiled as she exclaimed, looking up at him in the light of a street-lamp:

"You, Mr. Bob! From where do you come here? Will you at the General's stay? I must hurry back and the dinner get. Good-day to you, Captain Eaton." This as Larry came beside Bob and nodded to her in silence.

Bob burst into speech. "Look here, Elizabeth, we're too old friends for me to pretend anything with you. You've saved my life and you've watched over Lucy in German captivity. I can never forget that. Tell me the truth. What were you saying to Franz Kraft, and why did you come here to meet him?"

Elizabeth's eyes widened and she shrank back a

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little, with what Bob took to be either fear or suffering, though in the dim light he could not read her features. For a moment she did not answer and Bob, with a pang at his heart, as the doubt he would not harbor struggled for admittance, saw the bare hands clenched about her shawl shake a little. At last she spoke, her low voice eager and imploring:

“Dear Mr. Bob, you say you trust me. Then let me my secret keep! I cannot tell you all the truth now, because—because I cannot. But, Mr. Bob, believe me, it is a secret that can harm no one. Least of all could it harm you or any Americans. Soon you shall know all. Will not that content you?”

She spoke with trembling earnestness, stopping in the street and walking on again with uncertain steps, as though she hardly knew where her feet led her. Her eyes were raised to Bob's with such eloquent entreaty that he felt himself powerless to refuse her. He wished Larry, who owed Elizabeth nothing, would speak and urge on her the necessity for frankness. But Larry strode along in what seemed like silent disapproval. After a pause Bob said, his voice betraying his dissatisfaction:

“Elizabeth, of course I trust you. But I don't see why you can't trust me. I trust you so much that I'll tell you right now that Franz Kraft is

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under suspicion, and is the last person to take into your confidence. He's a regular bad hat ——"

"Oh, no, Mr. Bob—surely you are wrong!" cried Elizabeth, in what seemed real dismay. "He is a rough countryman, without speech or manners, but kind and generous. He has not the wits for plotting. Surely you mistake him."

She spoke as though combating sudden anxious thoughts. Bob wondered if she were not trying to convince herself of Franz' sincerity as much as to convince him.

"Elizabeth," he said, "when are you going to meet him again?"

She answered frankly, "One week from to-day, at the same hour. You will not of it speak, dear Mr. Bob?" She eyed Larry uncertainly and, as though guessing his suspicions, she added quickly, "It with politics nothing has to do. It is a private secret only."

"Then why not tell me?" asked Bob.

"After next time I will tell you all," Elizabeth promised. "Until then," she begged, "will you nothing to anyone say?"

"I'll say nothing, but I don't promise not to watch Franz. I tell you, Elizabeth, I don't believe in him, and if you make friends with such as he, you will have to share the suspicions that fall upon him."

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Elizabeth sighed deeply, but she made no more protests, and with no further satisfaction Bob parted with her at Larry's door.

CHAPTER X

A LETTER TO FRANZ

WITH the passing weeks Armand de la Tour had grown so much stronger that now his mother and sister began planning to return with him to their own country. As the surgeon offered no objections except a few lingering cautions, the departure became a near prospect, and Lucy was more eager than ever to see as much as possible of Michelle. She lost interest in Franz and Herr Johann and resented their intrusion on her time and thoughts.

"Michelle, there are such a lot of things I haven't told you and that you haven't told me," she said regretfully. "I wish we hadn't bothered so much with those everlasting Germans!"

They were taking their usual Sunday afternoon walk through the forest, Lucy, Michelle, Bob and Larry. Armand had stayed at the hospital, saving his strength for the journey to France.

At Lucy's words Bob looked thoughtful. He had not yet told Lucy of Elizabeth's strange rendezvous. He did not know what to think of it him-

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self. Looking up at the sky, glimpsed through the evergreen boughs, he remarked suddenly:

"Hello, it's all clouded up. Looks like snow."

"It does. We'd better start back," said Larry, for they were far beyond Franz' clearing, on the other side of the road that wound through the forest toward Badheim.

Michelle said, pondering over Lucy's words, "Why cannot you come to France, Lucy, before you go home? Surely we must see each other again."

"Janet Leslie has invited you to England," Lucy reminded her. "She is crazy to know you, I've written of you so often. Couldn't you come?"

Michelle shook her head in doubtful soberness. "That rests with *Maman* and Armand. Money is scarce with us now, and we have not yet a home, except the little house in Château-Plessis."

"Oh, how I'd love to go back there!" cried Lucy, warmed to vivid recollection. "Wouldn't you love it, Bob? Though Château-Plessis doesn't mean to you quite what it does to me."

"To me it means some rather bad days spent wondering what had become of Father and you," said Bob, still half-absorbed in thought, and profoundly annoyed at heart that Franz' schemes could so absorb him.

Larry broke in, "Leave off reminiscing a min-

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ute, will you? As Bob remarked, it's going to snow. In fact, it's begun. Suppose we turn back?"

As he spoke big flakes fell lightly on his overcoat sleeve, which he held up for the others' inspection. No wind stirred in the branches, but the cloudy sky had darkened the forest almost to twilight.

"Well, what's a snow-storm, anyway, Larry?" asked Lucy, unmoved. "It's rather nice here, I think, in this queer, dull light. We're not three miles from the hospital."

The snowflakes were now falling steadily, seeming to pour down all at once out of the heavens, as though emptied in bucketfuls.

"*Ma foi*, it is snowing hard!" exclaimed Michelle. "Captain Eaton is right, Lucy. Let us go back."

Lucy complied and the four turned in their tracks, the snowflakes whirling thickly about them. A cold wind suddenly rose, driving bleakly through the pines and changing the murmur of the green branches to a dismal wail.

"Yes, he's right," agreed Lucy, smiling as she drew her cape close around her. "A little snow-storm can go a long way in a German forest. Bob, *will* you tell me why you're so preoccupied?" she asked, looking with uneasy earnestness into her

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brother's face. "You've spoken twice since we've been out."

"I'll tell you," said Bob, seeing no use in keeping Lucy in the dark indefinitely. "It's about that same stupid mystery. I wish Alan had stayed here to ferret it out. Why did I ever dissuade him?"

"Go on, will you?" begged Lucy.

"All right. A couple of days ago I went to Coblenz to see—— Phew!" He stopped to plunge one hand into his collar. "This snow is getting down my neck. Would you believe it could come down so thick all of a sudden? Why, the sky was blue in spots when we started out."

"Look here, Lucy, you know where that lodge of Herr Johann's is, don't you? It must be near, for here's the road you spoke of." Larry paused beside the winding forest track, looking along it and through the trees on either side as well as the swirling snowflakes would permit.

"Yes, it's near here," said Lucy, "but why?"

"We'd better go there for shelter. The snow may stop and it may not. We're still two miles from home."

"But, Larry," protested Lucy, surprised, "it can't hurt us. Why, how often I've been out in snow-storms!"

"I know, it can't hurt you, nor Miss Michelle,

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nor me. But it can hurt Bob. His lungs were touched when he was frozen up in Archangel. The surgeon himself told me he mustn't risk any exposure."

"Oh, Larry, what rot! I'm strong enough," scoffed Bob.

But Lucy was an instant convert to Larry's side. "He told me that, too. What an idiot I am," she said in one breath. Then, looking anxiously around her, "Where would you say that hunting-lodge was, Michelle? I know it's near the road. If we follow along it——"

"I can find it," said Michelle, starting confidently up the road. "It was all fir and hemlock trees near it, except for a few birches. We must be close to it, Lucy."

"But it's idiotic," said Bob crossly. "Suppose it keeps on snowing?"

"Then you can stay there all night," said Larry. "I'll take the girls home and come back. Why be stupid and risk a relapse? You know it's cold you have to fear—you and Alan both."

Silenced, Bob followed the others along the road. At the end of ten minutes Michelle cried out and pointed to the little lodge, showing beyond the first fringe of birch and fir trees. Its roof and doorstep were newly covered with snow. The door was padlocked and the red curtains drawn.

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"Too bad I haven't the key Herr Johann offered me," said Bob as they approached the door.

Larry tugged at the padlock and twisted it, but in vain.

"Try the window," Lucy suggested.

"Try giving the padlock a good kick," said Bob. "That usually fetches them."

Larry stepped back and drove his heavy boot-heel in a sort of backward swing against the side of the lock. The padlock snapped and flew off into the snow. The bar was bent against the staple. Larry wrenched it open and pushed wide the door. "Welcome, in the name of the Kaiser," he said, sniffing the cold, musty air. "A fire is about the first thing we need."

"There's plenty of wood," said Lucy, as the four entered the lodge and shut the door. "Michelle and I saw the shadow of the flames and heard them crackle while we were shivering in the snow outside. Ouf, I'm almost frozen! It *has* grown cold. Bob, I hope to goodness you haven't hurt yourself."

"Not likely. Why, this would be a warm, enervating spring day in Archangel. There's the wood, in that bin."

Bob had struck matches as he spoke, for the lodge, with curtains drawn, was almost dark. He spied a candle on the rough wooden table in the

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principal room where they stood, and, lighting it, held it up to survey the surroundings. "Not much of a place," he remarked. "There can't be but two rooms, altogether."

"It's rather nice, though, cozy, if German," said Larry, throwing pine-boughs on the broad stone hearth.

There was no other furniture in the room than the big table, four or five massive chairs, cut from pine-trunks as rudely as if by Franz' own hands, and a couple of fox or wolf skins on the pine floor. There was a smoky-beamed ceiling above the red-curtained leaded windows, and trophies of the chase—stag-heads and rabbit skins, together with weapons, shotguns, pistols and sabres—ornamented the unplastered walls.

Larry had kindled the fire, which now began to blaze with a great cheerful light. Lucy drew aside one of the curtains to reveal the hemlock trunks and the dull twilight of the storm.

"Sit down, everybody. We're here for an hour or two," said Larry, dusting his sleeves over the hearth and looking rather pleased with his handiwork. "It's three o'clock. I don't think it will snow all the afternoon. It seldom does when it comes up in a flurry."

"I think I'll explore the other room," said Bob, nodding toward the closed door beside the hearth.

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“Herr Johann gave me a free hand, so it can’t be called snooping. Not that I’d feel much scruple ——”

“Wait a bit, Bob. Warm up first,” counselled Larry. He threw off his overcoat and sank into a chair beside the girls, who were already drawn up before the fire. He spoke casually, but Lucy discerned in his voice a lingering anxiety for Bob and added her own persuasion.

“There’s no hurry, Bob. Look at that beautiful fire Larry’s made. It’s worth breaking in here for.”

“I wonder what kind of talk has taken place before this hearth,” said Michelle, watching the flames. She glanced about the room and added, “It is very bare. They do not leave anything behind.”

“You may be sure of that,” said Bob. “Else he wouldn’t have invited me here so confidently. Still, he must feel pretty sure by now that I’m not coming. I’ll take a look around. Smarty-cats like Herr Johann sometimes think too poorly of other people’s intelligence. That’s a German failing.”

Lucy was so pleased with the rustic quaintness of the lodge interior, with the leaping fire on the great hearth and the snowflakes falling outside in the shadowy forest that she began to think that Herr Johann might be excused for his oddities.

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"I could almost believe that he comes here to hunt in winter," she declared, stretching her arms behind her head, her cape slipped from her shoulders in the pleasant warmth. "If I had this lodge I shouldn't be able to keep away from it."

"I'll tell you now what I began back there in the forest," proposed Bob, at this remark. "I told you about my talk with Herr Johann—— Did Lucy tell you, Michelle? Well, the next day I went to Coblenz to see Elizabeth, but she was out. Larry and I overtook her by accident, followed her, and saw her meet Franz on one of the terraces of the Rhine Embankment."

"Meet Franz!" Lucy started up to lean forward, staring into Bob's face. "Then he's all right! They did tell the truth!"

"That's one way of looking at it," Bob demurred. "Either they are all right or Elizabeth is all——"

"Bob!" Lucy caught her brother's arm in shocked surprise. "Why, Bob, how can you? You don't suspect—Elizabeth?"

"No, I really don't. Yet I have reason enough to. She wouldn't explain anything."

"Because there was nothing to tell," cried Lucy confidently. "Oh, now I shan't worry any more about Franz, if Elizabeth trusts him. Don't you see, Bob, what that means? Franz is just a dis-

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agreeable old German who hates us because we won."

"Hum, you're easily convinced," said Bob, staring into the fire. "I felt for a moment the same way, but now when I think of Herr Johann ——"

Bob met Larry's eyes, lighted with a faint, mocking gleam, and fell silent. Michelle said doubtfully:

"I, too, trust Elizabeth's friendship for America. But Franz—no, I do not trust him."

"What in the world can they have to say to each other?" Lucy wondered, thinking it over once more. "Where can she have met him first?"

Larry rose to throw pine-boughs on the fire and remarked, sitting down again, "You're rather easy, both of you." He glanced at Lucy and Bob. "All Franz' and Herr Johann's plotting and sneaking is forgotten at a word from Elizabeth. I know she's a good sort and fond of you, but, after all, she's a Boche. Couldn't she be influenced by a clever rogue among her fellow-countrymen? There's not a doubt but that she's in hand and glove with Franz. Why, Lucy, didn't we see her meet him by the river? And, more than that, she begged us not to say a word to anyone."

Lucy shook her head and still spoke confidently. "If she knows Franz and is friends with him it is not to plot against the Allies. I know Elizabeth

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better than you do, Larry. She's honest. If she were our enemy she would never have asked Bob to bring her from Berlin."

"And suppose she wanted to get here for reasons of her own?" Larry muttered under his breath. Aloud he said, "Germany is pretty well down and out. Even those Germans who, like Elizabeth, didn't favor the war, might be persuaded they must work for her now."

"Wouldn't she tell you how she happened to know Franz, Bob?" Lucy asked, almost pleadingly. "I'm sure she will if I ask her."

"We caught up with her after she left Franz, but I didn't have much time to question her. And she looked as though she hoped I wouldn't."

"How did she behave, Captain Gordon, when she saw you?" asked Michelle. "Did she look frightened?"

"No, she didn't. Did you think so, Larry?"

"No," Larry conceded. "She looked surprised and—well—uncomfortable."

Bob got up and moved toward the door beside the hearth. "Let's see what's in here, Larry," he suggested, trying the door.

It opened, admitting him to a small bedroom, furnished as barely as the rest of the lodge. It held a cot-bed, a table and chair, some wooden pegs driven in the wall, from which hung a curtain cov-

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ering some clothing, and a few ornaments of skins and weapons.

"May we come?" asked Lucy, when Bob and Larry had entered.

"Yes, come along," Bob called.

"Not much to see," said Larry, drawing back the red curtain from the single window. "Hello, it's stopped snowing. Perhaps you won't have to spend the night here, Bob."

"I never meant to," said Bob, looking curiously about him.

The cot had two heavy blankets folded upon it, and a wolf-skin stretched on the floor beside it. Several suits of clothing hung half-concealed behind the folds of calico, and some dog-collars dangled from the wooden pegs.

"I'm glad he took out the dogs," said Larry, fingering a nail-studded collar. "Johann von Eckhardt," he read inside it. "That's his name, all right. I dare say he's too proud of it to hide it. Bob, we ought easily to find out all about him."

"I've already written Dick Harding to ask him what he knows," said Bob. "He's in the Intelligence Department now, and has tabs on a lot of them. Look, here's a uniform."

He lifted the calico screen and revealed a Prussian officer's grey field-uniform, worn and faded, and stained with mud and rust. Beside it hung a

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hunting dress like the one Herr Johann usually wore, and a heavy fur-lined overcoat.

"He's a colonel," said Bob, touching the insignia on the blouse, "colonel of artillery. This must be a mild sort of hunting compared to what he's done. Larry, I believe you're right. Elizabeth stifled my suspicions for a while, but they're all coming back."

"They'd better," said Larry grimly.

"But not of Elizabeth!" cried Lucy hotly.

"All right, if you can explain it some other way," said Larry. "Well, there's nothing else to see here."

He and Bob approached the window. "Look, Larry, it's clearing. There are not more than two inches of snow on the ground. I think even my delicate little feet can pick their way home now."

Larry laughed, then pointed out through the woodland. "There's the road, see it, Bob? That's Franz' route when he takes his wood to Coblenz—or elsewhere. He's right under Herr Johann's eye."

"But old Johann doesn't spend much time here, only an occasional visit," remarked Bob.

While the two young officers talked together Lucy and Michelle lingered on the far side of the room, Lucy's eyes on the grey uniform, her loyal heart troubled by the sight of it, by the evidence of Herr Johann's profession. He was Franz' master



LUCY READ THE FEW LINES OF GERMAN

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and Franz was Elizabeth's friend. What could be the explanation?

With restless fingers she touched the grey cloth, felt something in the pocket, mechanically plunged in her hand and drew out a square, folded paper.

"What is it?" asked Michelle, taking it from her.

Lucy, hardly thinking what she did, reached for the pockets of the hunting-jacket hanging alongside. She felt swiftly in them and drew out a gold clasp-knife, a seal ring and a letter addressed to Franz Kraft, Badheim post-office, and post-marked Coblenz.

With a sensation of prying she slipped back the clasp-knife and the ring, and was about to return the letter when the handwriting caught her eyes and left her breathless, holding the letter in her hand. It was Elizabeth's writing. Michelle had carried the folded paper from the uniform pocket over to Bob and Larry. Lucy snatched open Elizabeth's letter and read the few lines of German:

FRANZ KRAFT:

I have your message and will be without fail on the Embankment at nightfall next Wednesday. From there you will take me to the place we know, five miles south, on the opposite shore. May we meet with success!

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The crossing is what I dread, for French torpedo boats patrol the river. Not that I have anything to fear, except that they should follow us.

I will never forget your services.

ELIZABETH MULLER.

Hot and panting, Lucy crammed the letter inside her dress and turned toward the window, as Michelle called to her to join the others.

They were bent over the paper Michelle had taken from Lucy's hand, a long, narrow map of the Rhine, from Cologne to Mayence, with about ten miles of territory on each side.

"What is it?" asked Lucy, trying to speak naturally, not daring to raise her eyes for fear of betraying her excitement.

"Just a map," said Larry. "Nothing special on it, that I can see, except these crosses, which might mean anything."

He pointed to a dozen or more small, black crosses in ink, marking various places along the river, towns or villages, or open country. Sometimes the crosses were on one side of the river, sometimes on the other, occasionally connected by a stroke of the pen.

"Probably a map he had during the war. I'll stick it back in his coat," said Bob. He crossed the room and felt about in the other pockets but

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returned empty-handed. "It's half-past four and time to go home."

"I'd better put out the fire," said Larry, as they left the bedroom. "I suppose Franz served under this von Eckhardt," he remarked, kicking apart the glowing embers. "Adelheid said her father left off soldiering to become a woodcutter. That must have been owing to von Eckhardt's patronage."

Lucy could hardly talk at all, her thoughts were in such a whirl of bewilderment. Nothing much was clear to her except her determination to keep Elizabeth's letter secret until she could think out its meaning for herself. Then she would either convince herself of the German woman's innocence or face her and demand the truth. But to show the letter now to Bob's suspicious eyes, to Larry's openly accusing ones, to condemn her old nurse on such hasty evidence—this she could not do.

But her heart throbbed with grief and anger, and she could not drive Elizabeth's face from her mind, that face whose truth and loyalty she had believed in so entirely, and which seemed all at once to hold the enemy's sly duplicity.

"It can't be true. It can't, it can't!" she told herself, as she gathered her cape around her and felt the letter crackle from where she had thrust it inside her dress.

"Come on," said Larry, leading the way out.

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"I'll put back the padlock as best I can. Wonder what Herr Johann will think of our intrusion?"

"He'll think we came to spy and didn't get much out of it," said Bob. "Let's cut across here, through the birches."

The faint squeak of wheels on the new-fallen snow sounded ahead of them. Larry glanced between the slender birch-trunks and, beyond the firs bordering the road, caught sight of a wagon moving slowly in the direction of Badheim.

"Someone's coming along the road," he said, putting out his hand to keep back the others. "I think it's old Franz himself."

Lucy, stealing up to his side, saw the horse and donkey drawing the wagon and gave a quick nod. "It's Franz," she said.

The woodcutter had come now almost abreast of where they stood. His wagon was heavily loaded with bundles of fagots roped together and partly sheltered by a tarpaulin cover. He drew rein and, jumping down into the snow, walked on as though inspecting the road, across which loose snow had drifted.

"No wonder he's afraid of getting stuck," said Bob. "His wagon's overloaded."

"Why in the world does he come out in such weather, and almost at nightfall?" murmured Larry, involuntarily moving nearer the road.

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Franz had disappeared around the turn. Bob said suddenly:

“Larry, let’s have a look at one of his bundles of wood. Be quick and we can manage it.”

He had no sooner spoken than by common consent he and Larry plunged forward through the trees to the road. They ran to the wagon and, while the donkey turned his head to watch them, from the neatly piled layers of fagot-bundles chose one at the top, more easily pulled from beneath the tarpaulin covering. In another minute they were back, ducking under the trees and out of sight at the moment when Franz reappeared, plodding along in the snow, head bent, and hands thrust in his pockets.

Michelle and Lucy waited breathless for Larry and Bob to rejoin them. Franz climbed up on his seat, picked up his reins and went on slowly down the road, the snow squeaking once more under the heavily loaded wheels.

Bob and Larry laid down the fagot-bundle and Bob with his pocket-knife cut the cords that bound the sticks together, while all eyes followed his movements with eager intentness. The sticks fell apart and scattered on the snow. There was nothing else in the bundle.

“One on us, Bob,” said Larry, gazing at the fagots rather sheepishly. “Now, why in thunder

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is he in such a rush to carry wood to Badheim—or Coblenz—to-day?"

"I give it up," said Bob disgustedly. "Let's go home."

In silence the four crossed the road and continued their way through the forest, which was now bathed in twilight shadows. Lucy was too lost in unhappy pondering over the letter hidden in her dress to give much thought to Franz' afternoon wanderings. She longed to confide in Michelle, but still hesitated, hating to hear someone else accuse Elizabeth of what she herself refused to believe. She was roused from her reverie by hearing Larry say:

"That's it. That's what we're afraid of. The Germans who have lost everything with the fall of the monarchy and who despise the new government, are combining—so we think—with the Bolsheviks. Anything to harass the Allies and delay the peace, do you see? They don't look further ahead than that, with German obtuseness. I thought of you, Bob, when I heard the rumor, because of your theories about the Bolshies that Alan would never listen to, and I believe that you have been right all the time."

"Alan's an idiot," said Bob crossly. His leg was hurting him but he tried not to limp. "I wish he were here to settle with Franz now. He needn't

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bother with any theories—just face him down until he tells the truth.”

“Well, we might do that much ourselves.”

“Yes, but I’m always held back by a lingering feeling that we’d find out only half the truth that way. To learn it all we must wait and watch. But Alan would never think that out. He’d go for Franz and Herr Johann as if he were hunting rabbits. It’s lots easier on the temper.”

“Hang on to your temper, we’re almost home,” said Larry, guessing the pain that Bob tried not to show. “About the German government, Bob; they say it’s still pretty wobbly. If anyone nips the German pro-Bolsheviki in the bud it will be the Allies. And we’d better go to it.”

“Berlin was riotous enough when Alan and I came through,” said Bob. “We were shot at from all directions.”

“No wonder Elizabeth wanted to leave,” remarked Larry.

Lucy glanced up at him, still keeping her troubled silence. Larry asked, disapprovingly:

“What’s the matter with you, anyway, Lucy? Do you think you’re a jolly companion to-day? I’d as soon take a walk with a dumb animal.”

“Thanks,” said Lucy, shaking off her gloomy preoccupation with an effort. “Talk to Michelle, can’t you?”

CAPTAIN LUCY

Larry glanced behind him at Michelle and shook his head in discouragement. "She looks as solemn as you do. Bob, I thought nurses' aides were sent here to cheer up the patients. If this goes on they'll all have a relapse."

"You are not a patient, Captain Eaton," smiled Michelle. "On the contrary, it is you whom we expect to cheer us. I am sorry to look so serious. I was thinking that this week I go away to France, and that before leaving I would like well to understand these strange happenings."

Bob said with conviction, "Michelle, before this week's over, I promise you'll know it all. I'm as sick of floundering as you are. I'm going to plunge in and fish out Franz' secret."

"Only, don't go in over your head," advised Larry. "You're flying against the wind when you face that wily old Johann. Hello, I've lost my simile."

"Never mind, it'll do, and the advice is fine," said Lucy. With a sigh she added, "Bob got safely out of Archangel only to run into a nest of Boches and try to ——"

"—smoke them out," finished Larry. "But what are you afraid of, Lucy, except of their eluding us? We've got the upper hand. Don't you know we won the war?"

"Sometimes I have to remind myself of it," de-

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clared Lucy soberly. "It's a queer mixture we live in now—neither war nor peace. I hate that old Franz and never look at him if I can help it, but I go every day to see Adelheid and can't but like her, poor little thing." All at once, as they neared the hospital clearing, she asked, "Are you on duty all day to-morrow, Larry?"

"No, in the afternoon I'm free. Why?"

"Nothing at all. Don't say anything," said Lucy quickly, with a nervous earnestness that made Larry stare at her almost with anxiety.

"What are you up to, anyhow?" he demanded.

"Something that you'll have to be up to with me," said Lucy with sudden resolution.

CHAPTER XI

WITH LARRY'S AID

THE morning after the walk in the snow-storm Lucy was alarmed to find Bob pale, tired and strangely preoccupied. He would hardly answer her questions, and his weariness and obvious anxiety were both greater than the events of the day before could explain. Lucy asked him, troubled enough herself without this added vexation:

“Is there anything new, Bob? Won't you tell me? Or do you really feel worse?”

“My leg hurts a bit, but not enough to worry about. Don't bother, Lucy, I'm all right.”

Nothing more could she get out of him, and she had too much to decide for herself to spend any longer time coaxing his confidence.

It was Wednesday, and not a holiday for her, but immediately after luncheon she went to Miss Pearse and begged the afternoon off duty. This was the harder as she did not want to explain her plan to anyone in the hospital, and least of all did she want any hint of it to reach Bob's ears. To-

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day was the day of Elizabeth's rendezvous, according to the letter which Lucy had reread half a dozen times over the night before by her bedroom candle. If she was to discover her old nurse's secret she must act to-day, and without Bob's help, for she was convinced that he was suffering again, and not for anything in the world would she have tempted him to fresh activity.

Miss Pearse was surprised at Lucy's request, but did not refuse consent. "Where are you going?" she asked. "To Coblenz? You'll want the whole afternoon, then. I'll have to take away your Thursday half-holiday."

"Of course, I meant you to. Oh, Miss Pearse, thanks ever so much. I'll work twice as hard."

Miss Pearse laughed, for this was one of Lucy's old habits, to run away from her duty on some adventure and make up for lost time later by a tremendous burst of energy. "Be back by supper time," she said, nodding good-bye.

Lucy had found out earlier in the day that a motor-truck was leaving the hospital soon after luncheon for Badheim with some of the convalescents. The driver promised to take her on to Coblenz. Her plans were vague enough. After turning over Elizabeth's strange conduct in her mind until she was weary she had come to no conclusion. Her one purpose now was to see Eliza-

CAPTAIN LUCY

beth, if possible, and, that failing, to find Larry and ask his help in place of Bob's.

By three o'clock the truck left her at the door of her father's house. It was a fine, sunny winter afternoon. The snow sparkled on the ground and the air was clear and bracing. The streets were crowded with people, many of whom stopped, with German inquisitiveness, to stare at Lucy as she waited on the door-step.

The door was opened by an orderly who greeted her with, "Oh, Miss, I'm sorry. The General went out an hour ago. He didn't say when he'd be home."

"Where's Elizabeth?" asked Lucy, her pulse quickening with the words.

"Elizabeth's out, too, Miss. She asked leave of the General this morning. Gone to see a friend, I think."

Lucy entered the house and, going into her father's study, sank down in his chair and caught hold of the telephone, thinking hard a minute. Elizabeth's absence made things real. There was no more time for hesitation. She called up Larry and, to her tremendous relief, heard his voice answer.

"Larry, it's Lucy," she said hurriedly. "I'm at Father's. Can you come here a minute? I wouldn't ask you if it were not ——"

IN THE HOME SECTOR

"Of course I'll come," Larry interrupted. "Why the excuses? I'll be there in a jiffy."

He rang off and Lucy sat waiting, trying to piece her plan together as she fingered the letter once more withdrawn from her pocket.

"At nightfall," she repeated to herself. "That means four or half-past. We haven't much time to lose."

In a quarter of an hour the bell rang, and Lucy, going to the house door, found Larry on the steps.

"Hello, Larry. Thank you lots for coming. Let's walk, shall we? I'll explain as we go," she said, all in a breath.

The next moment they were threading their way along the street, Larry's blue eyes turned on Lucy with a curiosity that refused to be suppressed. "I'm all ready to hear about it," he said. "Which way shall we go?"

"Larry, can you get a launch? You told me the other day you took Colonel Wigmore's when you needed one."

"Why, yes, I can get one. What for?"

"Where is it? Let's walk in that direction."

At Lucy's earnestness Larry glanced keenly at her and answered, "All right. Come straight across town to the Embankment. There ought to be a launch along there that I can pick up. Where do we go in it?"

CAPTAIN LUCY

Lucy handed him Elizabeth's letter saying, "Read that. I found it in the pocket of Herr Johann's coat yesterday. Bob is tired out and his leg hurts him. I wouldn't let him know for anything. That's why I'm begging you to help me. I want to follow Elizabeth and see where she goes. You and I have often gone out on the river for an hour. No one need know the truth. We'll find out why Elizabeth meets Franz. If she's all right, I want to know it, and if she isn't ——"

Lucy's voice shook a little. She was too fond of Elizabeth to face the discovery of her treachery without real sorrow. Even now she could not believe in it, and her thoughts wavered wretchedly between doubt and confidence.

"Larry, I don't think she would deceive us! I can't believe it!" she cried, as Larry finished reading Elizabeth's note and handed it back to her.

"Hum—looks queer," was his comment. Then, after a moment's silence, "All right, Lucy, we'll go. And I'm going to take someone else along. You won't mind when you see who it is."

He turned to beckon to a passing soldier as he spoke and Lucy did not hear his last words. They were nearing one of the tree-bordered walks of the Rhine Embankment.

"Look, there's an airplane," said Lucy, pointing across the river.

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Larry said a word to the soldier which sent the man, with a quick salute, down a near-by street. Then he showed Lucy a motor-boat moored to a little wharf at the river's edge. "I suppose I'm wasting my breath, Lucy, when I ask you to stay here and let us go on the wild-goose chase?"

"Us? Who's us?" said Lucy, ignoring the proposal. "I don't want anyone else to know."

"You won't object to Harding, will you?"

"Major Dick Harding? Is he here? Is he coming?" cried Lucy, forgetting for a moment her anxiety.

"Yes. Got here this morning. You remember Bob wrote him asking about von Eckhardt? He's come with quite a bit of news, including some that will prove Bob a good guesser. Here he is now."

Major Harding came swinging along at a quick walk, and his face lighted up at sight of Larry's companion.

"How are you, Captain Lucy?" he exclaimed, holding out his hand. "I thought you were in Badheim. I was going out there to see you. What are you doing here?"

"We're waiting for you, Major Harding," said Lucy, her excitement returning with the recollection of her strange errand. "We need your help."

Major Harding glanced quickly from her to Larry for confirmation. Larry nodded, then said,

CAPTAIN LUCY

"Will you come out on the river with us, Harding? There's the boat. We'll explain as we go. Lucy's got something up, as usual."

Major Harding agreed and asked not another question until the motor-boat's crew had pushed off from the dock and the swift little craft was moving up-stream with its three passengers. Then Larry handed him Elizabeth's letter, and repeated all he himself knew of Elizabeth's relations with Franz and Herr Johann.

"We're off on their trail now," he finished. "We'd no time to explain to you on shore. What do you think, Harding? Lucy can't believe Elizabeth is up to mischief."

Lucy was watching the Stars and Stripes floating over the giant fortress of Ehrenbreitstein, just across the river. Now she lowered her eyes to Major Harding's face.

He answered thoughtfully, "I can hardly believe it either, that Elizabeth has turned traitor. Yet how to explain this ——" He glanced at the note in his hand. "As for von Eckhardt, I told you, Eaton, what I know of him. He's one of the most bitter malcontents in Germany. He has lost everything with the Kaiser's fall and he hates the Republican government. He would league himself with no matter which enemy of ours now—anything to break up the Allies and delay the peace."

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"But how? What can he do?" asked Lucy, feeling once more as though it were only a dream that the war was over.

"Lots of ways," said Major Harding. "Fortunately we're on to the way he adopted, and I don't think, as I told Larry, that he's got very far. What he's doing here is only a small part of his plottings throughout Germany. He's a clever rascal." He spoke low, glancing at the steersman.

"Well, what is he doing?" asked Lucy, her heart thumping as she put the question.

Major Harding saw her flushed face and laid a friendly hand on her arm, saying, "You'll hear it all soon enough. Let's decide what we have to do now. To begin with, how is your precious Elizabeth going to get across the Rhine? And how are we to know her landing-place?"

"I've thought of that," said Larry. "She probably crossed on one of the barges that take over Franz' wood. As for the landing-place, we'll have to look for it. Five miles up, she said."

As he spoke the boat sped past the village of Cappellen, the castle of Stolzenfels towering on the hill three hundred feet above. Twilight began to darken the river and from the banks stray lights shone out. A torpedo boat cast its gleaming search-light over the water. The broad stream was almost deserted, a few scows were being towed

CAPTAIN LUCY

along, and a river steamer passed, going toward Mayence.

"We'd better go inshore, before it gets dark," Larry suggested. "We'll have to trace them by the wood-barge. When I think of Franz and his honest labors!" Larry gave a sudden snort of indignation. Then to the steersman he ordered, "Go inshore and turn the search-light along the bank. Are we five miles south of Coblenz?"

"Yes, sir, within a half-mile," the man answered.

"This is guesswork, Eaton," Major Harding protested. "We can't scour a mile of river shore in the dark. Before we stumble on them they'll have had their talk and gone home."

"It's not so hard as you'd think," declared Larry. "I know the banks pretty well along here. Don't throw the search-light over the shore, Ed," he directed the man by the steersman's side.

The boat was drifting now, in the shadow of the bank. Night had fallen and the moon was rising over the steep hillside that loomed above them.

"See there, Harding?" Larry continued, pointing inshore. "All along here are rocky or wooded slopes. Do you see the bushes growing low along the bank? There are no vineyards for half a mile further. It's fairly deserted. We have only to find the barge they came in."

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"There's a light, Larry," Lucy whispered, her heart hammering with nervous excitement. "What can it be?"

"It's a house near the little hamlet below here, Altheim, I think it's called. Shut off your search-light, Ed."

"There's a barge, sir," said the steersman, pointing ahead.

The boat's passengers stared into the darkness, faintly lighted now by the moon touching the water with phosphorescent gleams. Along the dark line of the shore a darker blot showed, and, as the boat floated nearer, a big, heavily-loaded barge came into sight, fastened to one of the small trees growing near the bank, and somewhat hidden by the bushes' low-growing bare branches.

"Push in here, Rogers," Larry ordered. "Can you make a landing?"

"I think so, sir. Throw a light on, Ed. Why, yes, sir, here's a bit of a dock."

He cautiously floated the boat inshore and moored her alongside a little plank landing-stage.

"We must be near the hamlet," said Larry. "Yes, there are the lights," he added, parting the bushes and peering up the slope.

He sprang out, followed by Major Harding, who gave Lucy a hand, saying doubtfully:

CAPTAIN LUCY

"I don't like your going with us, Lucy. I don't know where we are going, for that matter."

"Up to the hamlet," said Larry. "Or not really to it, but to that lonely little cottage this side of it. We've only a hundred yards to climb."

"I'm not afraid, Major Harding," said Lucy, still whispering. "I can't feel frightened at meeting Elizabeth."

"Come on," said Larry, leading the way over the rough, rising ground. "Ed, you come, too. Rogers, stay with the boat."

"How do you know they are in that cottage?" asked Major Harding. "While we're climbing the hill they may give us the slip."

"I don't know why I'm sure, but I am," declared Larry, refusing to be deterred. "Don't you see what an ideal place it is for a secret meeting? And though it's so lonely, they've taken the added precaution of lighting only one candle. Compare that faint glimmer with the lighted windows of the hamlet. And it's the nearest house to the landing-stage. How are you, Lucy? Need a helping hand?"

"No, I'm all right."

They had begun climbing the steep hillside, which was rocky underfoot, for the snow had barely clung there, with thickets at intervals, and groves

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of small trees rising black and bare in the moonlight. In ten minutes they neared the little house perched on the slope, with beside it a tiny orchard growing on a bit of fairly levelled ground. All was silent around it, and all dark, but for the moon, the lighted window hidden now by a turn in the rocky path.

Lucy stopped, panting, in front of the cottage, and looked back down the slope at the broad, shining river, and inshore at the dozen twinkling lights of the hamlet. The wind was blowing over the heights with wintry bleakness. A shiver of cold and apprehension caught her, but she fastened her coat closer and plucked up her resolution. Major Harding and Larry were beside her and curiosity was stronger in her than any other feeling—the longing to know the truth and be free from miserable doubts and misgivings.

“The windows have no curtains,” said Larry softly. “Let’s steal up and take a look.”

Major Harding complied in silence, his calm willingness suggesting to Lucy that he did not expect to find anything surprising in the lonely little hillside shanty. She herself began to doubt Larry’s premonitions, and was half prepared to see a harmless old German peasant couple sitting in the light of their solitary candle. So that when she had crept around the angle of the wall and, over

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Larry's shoulder, peeped into the little room where the candle burned she almost cried out in her amazement.

Elizabeth was seated on a wooden chair not far from the window, her shawl thrown back from her head and her thin hands clasped nervously together. Beside her sat Franz Kraft, looking thoroughly frightened and twisting his woolen cap constantly between his strong, lean fingers. Both of them had their eyes raised toward a third person who had risen from his seat to stand before them, talking volubly, a burly, middle-aged German in rough countrymen's clothes, with bristly hair and red, excited face. He spoke with authority, punctuating his words by gestures with the boatman's visored cap he held in his hand.

"Karl!" said Lucy, catching her breath.

Major Harding echoed the word, his hand touching her arm.

At the other end of the little closed room a feeble fire burned, and before it sat an elderly man smoking a pipe and toasting his toes near the embers. He seemed quite indifferent to the talk that was going on around him.

Larry leaned forward as near as he could without discovery and tried to catch Karl's eager words. But the night wind blew strongly through the frosty boughs of the orchard trees, and Karl's

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rapid German came to the listeners' ears an unintelligible flood of speech.

"We shan't learn anything this way," Major Harding whispered.

Lucy's eyes were fastened on Elizabeth's face, reading in the features she knew so well the only possible reason for this seeming faithlessness. The little German woman's eyes were soft, earnest and pleading as ever. Their troubled glance spoke indecision, unhappiness, entreaty—anything but conspiracy.

"She came here to see Karl," Lucy told herself, and, defending Elizabeth, she sought hard to prove Elizabeth's companions innocent—to find the harmless explanation for which she longed. "Franz brought her out of kindness. She dared not have Karl come to Coblenz."

"I'm going in," said Major Harding suddenly.

Larry caught his arm. "What for? What reason will you give—the truth?"

"I have all the reasons I need—those I told you. Franz' conduct is enough, and I'd like to face Karl Müller ——"

"Elizabeth's husband?" asked Larry quickly. "Ah-h—then she came here to see him."

"Yes, I rather think poor Elizabeth has been a cat's-paw in these rascals' hands. The boatman

had better come, too, Eaton, though I don't think they'll show any violence."

"There are two doors," said Larry. "Ed, you guard the back one. Here's my revolver. Let no one out."

As Larry spoke he stepped up to the front door of the cottage, lost in shadow beneath its spreading gable, and knocked loudly on the shaky casement, which rattled with his blows. Immediately a deep silence succeeded Karl's rumbling voice. No answer, and Larry rapped again, this time with determination.

"They've put out the candle," said Major Harding, glancing around at the window. "Don't do any peeking, Lucy. Stay behind me. They may put up a fight."

"All right. They can't get out. I'll watch the windows on this side," said Larry.

In another minute slow footsteps sounded within the cottage, hesitating inside the door. Then the bolt was drawn, the door pulled open a few inches, and Larry flashed his pocket-light into the frightened face of the old German householder who had sat crouched over the fire.

"What would you have, gentlemen?" he stammered.

Major Harding, hearing a shout from the back door, ran around to Ed's aid. Larry, not answer-

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ing the old man's question, pushed open the door and entered with Lucy behind him.

"Light the candle," he shouted in German. "No use hiding. We know who are here. Franz Kraft! Karl and Elizabeth Müller! Show yourselves—you're caught."

There was a murmur of speech in the next room, which Lucy recognized as Elizabeth's voice, pleading tremblingly with someone. A match was scratched and the candle lighted just as Major Harding and Ed appeared from the back door, holding Karl firmly between them.

"Karl tried to escape," Major Harding explained. "He gave Ed a vicious punch in the ribs, but no worse damage. The others all right?"

"Yes," Larry nodded, looking about the little room, still dim in spite of candle and fire-light.

Elizabeth had covered her face with her shaking hands. Now in her astonishment she lowered them to falter out, "Miss Lucy—here!" She sank down to avoid scrutiny in a shadowy corner, for Karl had turned on her with a savage frown darkening his hard face.

Franz stood shuffling his feet together, and casting odd glances from the cottage window down the steep hillside.

"What's he looking for?" Larry asked himself. Lucy could not help doing what she now did,

CAPTAIN LUCY

though the explanation of the whole strange affair was still remote from her. She crept around to her old nurse's side, and in the shadow, dropped down by Elizabeth's crouching figure and caught hold of her thin, trembling hands.

"Never mind, Elizabeth, it's all right—I believe in you," she whispered, hardly thinking what she said. "No one is going to hurt you. Only tell the truth—whatever it is."

Elizabeth's hand pressed Lucy's in a quick grateful clasp, but, apart from a little gasping sigh, she made no answer. Her eyes were turned to Karl, whom Larry had begun to question.

"What are you doing here?" he asked in English.

Karl protested with an eagerness almost like violence, "No harm, Captain. I my wife came to see." He waved his big arm toward Elizabeth in confirmation.

"That's not quite good enough. Why make such a secret of it? Why must Franz arrange the meeting? And why were you so anxious to get away that you attacked the soldier I put on guard at the back door?"

Karl hesitated for an instant, then plunged on, trying to speak confidently, "I dared not in the day cross the Rhine, Captain, because I thought the Americans do not friendly to me feel. I

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thought better keep quiet — for my wife's sake."

"Thoughtful of Elizabeth, as usual," remarked Major Harding, stepping into the candle-light.

Here was another surprise for Karl, and not a pleasant one. "You? It is you, Lieutenant—I mean Major?" he stammered, staring.

"Yes, another of your old friends. You say you came here to see Elizabeth. How did it happen that Franz arranged the meeting? How came he to interest himself?"

At this Elizabeth rose to her feet and started hastily forward. "Major Harding!" she begged, "one moment listen! Franz knew Karl because they had a little business of selling wood together. Franz somehow learned that I was in Coblenz. He offered to take me to see Karl, for one year I had not seen him. But, because Karl was afraid to cross the river—for he feared to meet General Gordon or Mr. Bob—Franz fixed it that I might cross and meet Karl here. There is no wrong in that, Major—except a little secrecy. I the truth tell you!"

Major Harding looked at Elizabeth's honest, pleading eyes, at the hands clasped on her breast, and slowly nodded.

"I believe you, Elizabeth," he said. "But I believe you have been fooled. You were meant to do

CAPTAIN LUCY

just what you are doing—by your known honesty to whitewash von Eckhardt and his crew. It wasn't a bad idea, for it almost succeeded. Don't you know anything at all about their schemes? What was Karl saying to you before we came in?"

He spoke low, knowing that Karl was listening like a fox, but Elizabeth answered frankly:

"He talked a little of the Fatherland—how poor it was and how bitter was defeat. He said we must work for Germany. I, too, was willing—many poor there are around us here."

"But that wasn't the kind of work he meant," said Major Harding. "I suppose he'd have got to it presently." Suddenly changing into German he asked Franz, "Why did you bring Frau Müller here?"

"To see her husband, Herr Captain," Franz answered, breathing hard. "We Germans befriend each other. Why are you angry?"

"Come, Harding, don't you see there's only one way?" said Larry, losing patience.

"Yes," Major Harding nodded. "Step over here, Karl."

"Ed, keep an eye on Franz," said Larry, as Karl slowly advanced to the table on which the candle burned. "Karl, hands up," he ordered.

The German obeyed in silence, his red face flushing deeper with apprehension, his shrewd eyes

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turning with frightened haste from Larry to Major Harding in hope of some chance of conciliation.

"I the little savings from the wood-sellings have with me——" he faltered, obviously racking his brain for a plausible story.

In silence Larry took from his pockets a revolver, a half dozen cartridges, about two hundred marks in money, a promissory note for eighty marks signed by von Eckhardt, and, lastly, a square of pasteboard on which was stamped a pilot's license to navigate a steam tug or launch between Cologne and Mayence.

All during Larry's search Karl cast beseeching glances toward his captors, thrusting his tongue out between his teeth in his agonized attempt to find some satisfactory explanation.

"Nothing wrong, just my business. The Herr Officers don't accuse me of anything—is it not so?" he jerked out with a feeble assumption of frankness. "Surely the war is over."

"Now, Franz," said Larry, turning his attention to the woodcutter, who stood by, silent and morose as ever.

This search revealed nothing of interest but a key, which Larry guessed to be that of Herr Johann's lodge. Reminded of Franz' arrogant master, he inquired:

CAPTAIN LUCY

“Franz, where is Herr Johann? Why didn’t he come with you?”

Instead of answering, as Larry expected he would, that Herr Johann had nothing to do with Karl’s and Elizabeth’s meeting, Franz started, looked again toward the window, then back at Larry, with terror in his eyes. His sour lips opened in desperate haste, though all he managed to say was to mutter, “I do not know where he is, Herr Officer.”

Lucy, now satisfied of Elizabeth’s innocence, watched her old nurse’s unhappy face with a warm throb of pity, and could hardly forgive herself for her suspicions.

“Tell me, Major Harding,” she begged, while Larry was questioning Karl, “why did they want to bring her here? I don’t yet quite see what they got out of it.”

“Don’t you? If they were caught they could claim her as an ally. She would protest innocence and would probably be believed. They needed Karl to work with them near Coblenz, and Elizabeth was a fine excuse for his presence. I suppose as soon as Karl knew she was in Coblenz he agreed to make up with her.”

“But what is it they are doing? You didn’t tell me?” Lucy asked with breathless eagerness.

“Come, Harding,” said Larry, before the elder

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officer could reply. "Don't you think we'd better start? We can take them all in the boat. It must be after six o'clock."

Lucy thought confusedly, "Elizabeth ought to be cooking Father's dinner." Suddenly she exclaimed, "What's that?"

Two shots had sounded from below the hill along the river bank. They were followed by a shout which echoed among the rocky slopes. Lucy and the two officers ran to the window, but below the hillside all was dark where the moonlight did not penetrate.

"What on earth," Larry muttered. "Let's go, Harding. That didn't come from the hamlet. It sounded right by the landing-stage. Rogers has a pistol, but why should he fire? Come on!"

"Don't be too hasty. We've got these men to guard. Easy enough for them to bolt."

"Ed, you guard Franz," Larry ordered. "I'll take Karl, Harding, and you might give a hand to Lucy. Elizabeth isn't going to run away."

Lucy was still standing by the window, peering out into the moonlight and shadow. As Larry stopped speaking she heard the sound of footsteps running up the hillside and across the level. A figure appeared in the moonlight around one angle of the cottage and a panting voice shouted:

"Dick! Larry! Where are you?"

CAPTAIN LUCY

"It's Bob," said Lucy with a gasp.

Larry ran to the front door and threw it open. Bob, dressed for flying, came in breathless, staring around him in amazement. Then, "Lucy! You here?" he said.

"Oh, Bob, I didn't tell you on purpose," Lucy cried, glancing at Bob's leg, his safety more to her now than the track of the conspirators. "I hoped you wouldn't know!"

Larry grinned in spite of himself. "Better not try to fool each other again," he said. "But the shots, Bob, what were they?"

"I fired them, to scare von Eckhardt back to shore. I've got him safe enough. Your steersman is guarding him. He came in a motor-boat."

"Here's the pilot," said Larry, pointing to Karl.

"What, Karl!" Bob made no effort to conceal his disgust and annoyance. "So you had to turn up again!" Turning from the German, who was regarding him with a funny mixture of terror and would-be friendly humility, Bob said to Larry, "Von Eckhardt must have had other errands along the river while Karl was busy here. He has another fellow running his boat—an idiot who couldn't reverse his engines fast enough to get away from me."

"Ludwig, that is," explained Karl ingratiatingly. "He is a real donkey, Mr. Bob."

CHAPTER XII

UNKNOWN TO HISTORY

WHEN Lucy, that morning at Badheim hospital, had remarked Bob's altered face, she blamed it all on his exposure to the snow-storm the afternoon before. She never guessed how he had spent the middle hours of the night following the visit to Herr Johann's lodge, and Bob, still undecided on his own course of action, had let her think that he was tired and moody because his leg hurt him.

It did hurt, as a fact, after his midnight adventure, for he had been on his feet longer than he realized, oblivious to pain in the absorption of his discovery. He did not know just what it was that started him up out of bed on his tour of exploration, except that in a troubled dream he had seen Franz driving through the snow-storm, and Herr Johann looking on with his face of calm audacity. For some reason, or by a kind of warning instinct, Bob had got up and dressed as eleven o'clock showed on the radium dial of his watch. He crept out of his room on to the hospital veranda, where all was darkness and silence.

In a moment he was crossing the open, the snow

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faintly lighted by a moon across which wind-clouds drifted. The air was very cold. He buttoned his overcoat as he entered the forest, and, walking fast, came in a quarter of an hour to the edge of Franz' clearing and heard the spring bubbling up in its basin somewhere on his left.

The little cottage showed dark against the snow, its shadow lying in front of it in the moonlight. Bob leaned against a tree and watched a moment, shivering as the wind stirred the branches, and wondering if he were losing his sleep and freezing himself for nothing. He had not stood there five minutes when something moved in the shadow in front of the cottage. Someone had come out of the door, closing it silently. The woodcutter paused at the edge of the moonlight and cast a quick glance about the clearing. Then, putting his fingers to his mouth, he gave a shrill whistle.

At once another man appeared from the forest opposite to where Bob stood watching. He crossed the snow at a hurried walk, with an awkward, stoop-shouldered gait. At his approach Franz turned the corner of the cottage and the two disappeared behind it.

Curiosity would not let Bob stay where he was, yet to cross the clearing in the moonlight was to invite discovery. Though the men were too busy to notice him he imagined Trudchen's unhappy, anx-

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ious eyes on guard at the darkened cottage window, ready to give warning of any intruder. But he determined to risk it, rather than wait in hiding and learn nothing. He fought against his impatience for ten or fifteen minutes, until the moon vanished behind a cloud and for a moment left the clearing in comparative darkness. Then he made a run for it, and, when the cloud had glided past, he was in the shelter of the cottage walls.

He crouched down against the rough pine logs, stealing cautiously toward the rear. Now he could hear sounds of the animals being led out and harnessed, and of a load of wood piled on the wagon. He heard no voices. The two men seemed not to exchange a word as they worked, as though eager haste left no time for a moment's conversation.

Bob reached the back corner of the cottage, and, peeping around it, saw the wagon standing, with the animals harnessed, in front of the shed. It was already half loaded with fagot-bundles, which Franz and his companion were still carrying out on their backs from within the shed. In five minutes more the wagon was well loaded. Franz muttered something to the other, upon which both of them left the shed and, going over to one of the fagot-piles in the clearing, brought bundles of wood from there to form the top layers of the load.

Bob's heart gave a thump of sudden compre-

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hension. "It was from the top layer that Larry and I took our bundle," he thought, catching hold of the cottage wall to keep himself from bursting out and facing Franz then and there.

A few minutes more and all was ready. The tarpaulin was lashed on the wagon and the shed doors closed. The two men mounted to the seat and drove slowly off across the snow toward the forest road.

Bob made himself wait until the wagon had entered the woodland, then he ran to the shed doors, unbolted and flung them open. He drew out his torch and flashed it over a rough floor strewn with fagots, balls of string and bits of wood and bark. Overhead was nothing but rafters, with a rack full of hay. On one side were the animals' stalls.

He began examining the floor inch by inch. Half-way through he left off to enter one of the stalls and there continue his scrutiny. He kicked aside a handful of straw and a crowbar lying at one side.

"Here we are," he said to himself.

Setting his torch between the bars of the manger, he took up the crowbar and pried it into the cracks of the flooring. At the second trial a big piece of the floor—boards nailed together—rose up and tipped over, leaving a black, gaping hole. He seized the torch and played its beams over the

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opening. A ladder led downward half a dozen feet.

Bob felt of the ladder, stepped on it, flashed his light ahead of him and descended. He found himself in a little cellar, chill with sunless cold, its walls piled with wooden boxes. On the floor were bundles of fagots, and piles of loose wood, ready to be tied. Bob turned his light on the boxes, fumbled with the lids, found one on which the boards had been laid back unfastened, and pushed them aside.

"Of course—might have known it," he thought, a rush of anger mounting in him until he forgot the cold in a burning heat of indignation. The box was filled with machine gun ammunition belts. With his foot Bob touched a rifle bullet lying on the floor. "Good enough, Herr Johann, so you're a Bolshie after all. Androvsky was right about the Boches. They'll take any means for an end."

As Bob made these bitter reflections he turned and remounted the ladder. He put back the piece of flooring, and scattered the straw about the stall again. Switching off his torch he went slowly toward the shed doorway, outside of which stood Trudchen in the moonlight, a ragged shawl gathered about her, her hair flying in the wind and her face set with terror.

Bob looked at her with sharp annoyance. He

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was in a rage at Franz and he wanted to hate everything belonging to him. So it was with real vexation that he found himself feeling not so much anger as pity at sight of the trembling woman before him. He thrust his torch into his pocket and said moodily:

“Well, Frau, do you stay up all night, too? Franz has a nice little business here. I’ve been looking over his stores.”

He started off, but Trudchen came beside him, panting, one hand touching his arm.

“Herr Captain, will you listen? Will you have pity on us?” she entreated, her fluent German, in her breathless haste, almost too much for Bob’s unaccustomed ears.

“Listen to what?” he asked impatiently. “I know all about it.”

Trudchen began to wring her hands in her desperation. “Oh, Herr Captain, my children! What will become of us? Franz has obeyed Herr Johann like a dumb slave! It was he who took us out of starving poverty, after we had to leave the Reichsland. It was he who promised to support us if Franz would—if he would ——”

“Take charge of the munitions stored here and get them safely over the river,” put in Bob.

“But oh, Herr American, Franz did not want to! And I, God knows I did not want to have any-

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thing to do with it. But it was that or all starve together. Franz persuaded me that he was serving Germany, and that we would be rich and happy. In two weeks more it was all to finish, our shed would be empty and the danger over. I don't half understand."

"Herr Johann employed other men, too, didn't he?"

"Oh, yes, many. All along the Rhine, north and south, where stores of munitions are hidden. From long ago, before the war ended, they are hidden. Oh, what am I telling you!" In her misery and bewilderment poor Trudchen buried her face in her ragged shawl and sobbed.

Moved with pity, harden his heart as he would, Bob touched her arm, saying, "Don't cry, Frau. Look here—we'll help your children. It's not their fault."

"Oh, kind Herr Captain, have pity on us! Don't betray Franz to your officers!"

"Not ——" Bob checked himself on the verge of an indignant retort. "We won't forget your children, anyway. Go back into the house now. What time will Franz get home? Tell me the truth. It will be best for him."

"Not before night, he said. Oh, *mein Herr*, what will happen to us?" Trudchen shook her head as she tried to wipe the tears from her eyes.

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"It is hard to live poor and without hope. Herr von Eckhardt promised us wealth."

"Have you known him long?" asked Bob.

"Yes, many years, for Franz was his gamekeeper before the war. Our little farm was on his estate in the Reichsland. And during the war Franz was his soldier-servant. Oh, are you going away now? What are you going to do?"

"Nothing, just now," said Bob, his forbearance at an end and longing only for solitude in which to think over what he had discovered. "Good-bye, Frau, and don't despair." He fairly ran away from the shed and across the clearing.

It was not an hour after midnight when he re-entered the hospital, but he slept so little between then and daybreak that his tired face struck Lucy with dismay when she saw him at breakfast time. He put her off with evasions, unwilling to confide in her just then, lest in her anxiety she should oppose his plan. He had risen with the dawn, found Miller, the Hospital Corps man who had accompanied him and Alan from Archangel, and sent him into the forest on guard.

"I'll have you excused here," he told him. "Go to the clearing every hour all day. If you see any men gathered there come back and tell my sister. Say I told you to, and that she must notify Headquarters in Coblenz."

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He never guessed Lucy's own schemes nor her absence from the hospital, when, shortly after her departure, he obtained leave of absence to visit his father and drove to Coblenz in General Gordon's car. He had the chauffeur drop him at Larry's lodgings and dismissed the car. But the lodgings were empty, for Larry had that moment left in response to Lucy's call. Bob decided there was no time to lose looking for his friend, or for General Gordon either. He saw the pale, wintry sun already sinking, and knew that twilight was not far off. He must discover Elizabeth's rendezvous now if at all.

Naturally he had no inkling of Elizabeth's agreement to cross the river to meet her husband. He knew no more than what the German woman had told him of her next meeting with Franz, the day he had surprised her on the Embankment. He followed, for want of a better plan, the same road by which he and Larry had gone that day. Walking fast, he came out before long by the river and began sauntering along one of the terraces, glancing about him for any sign of a familiar figure.

The silver ripples of the broad river shone in the late sunlight, and occasional boats glided along its current. There were promenaders on the Embankment, but, though Bob wandered along for a quarter of a mile, he saw nothing of either Franz

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or Elizabeth. Yet he hated to give up the search. After having, the night before, wrested Franz' secret from him, he could not get over the feeling that to-day was to see the whole mystery revealed.

All at once, as he stood leaning for a moment against a tree and looking out over the river, he heard the sound of oars in row-locks below him, and, glancing down, saw a big rowboat, rowed by two men, with a barge in tow, loaded with wood. It passed slowly on up the river, Bob's eyes on it until it was a hundred feet away. At sight of the wood he had given a start. Usual and commonplace as such a cargo was, it recalled all of last night's revelation to him now. He looked at the rowers and recognized Franz and the stoop-shouldered man who had met him at midnight in the clearing. At the rowboat's stern was a little canvas shelter. Bob tried to peer beneath it, but without success. Was Elizabeth crouching there? Tensely he stood a second longer, watching. In that second he saw a French torpedo-boat bear down upon the wood-barge, and saw Franz hoist the flag that was his permit to navigate the river with his cargo.

"Fooled by that Boche!" Bob thought, anger rising again hotly in him. He turned and ran from the Embankment.

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His one thought now was to follow Franz to his destination. But he had no motor-boat at his disposal, and to find one was not, like Lucy's, his first idea. Another and a swifter means of travel occurred to him, as for two years back it had done in every predicament where there was distance to be covered. He met an army motor-car passing through the streets and, hailing the driver, asked to be taken to the Air Field.

Airplanes were few in Coblenz, but Bob got hold of one, for the use of an airplane was a thing no one in the Allied armies could refuse Bob Gordon. He gave the engine of the Curtis biplane offered him the merest glance over. He knew the flight could be but a short one. He promised the frankly curious lieutenant in charge to return the plane that night and to tell him all about it. In half an hour after he had seen Franz glide past the Embankment, and about the time that Larry sent his message to Major Harding, Bob was up in the air and flying over the Rhine.

He found glasses in the plane's cockpit, and with them searched the river, flying at low speed about eight hundred feet above the water. It did not take him long to find the rowboat with the barge in tow. It was moving steadily on up-stream. He mounted higher and flew over the castle of Ehrenbreitstein, in case the hovering plane should arouse

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Franz' suspicions. It was easy enough to keep the barge in sight on its slow progress. He floated about among the clouds until Franz and his fellow-oarsmen turned in close below the hamlet of Altheim.

Bob watched them land, draw the barge in and moor it, after which Franz' companion began rowing on up-stream alone. But through his glasses Bob had seen a woman's figure step from the boat on to the landing-stage and follow Franz up the hillside, almost running behind his big strides. Sinking lower, Bob saw Franz and Elizabeth turn from the hamlet road to climb the slope toward the lonely cottage, then he flew on over the hamlet to the pasture lands beyond.

Twilight was falling, and Bob's last Archangel flight had left him with no love for night landings on unknown ground. Without more delay, he picked out a stretch of level meadow that made a high, narrow valley behind the hamlet. He flew slowly down and landed on the snow-covered grass.

Lights had begun to twinkle from the near-by houses, and dusk had turned everything violet and grey around him. He caught sight of a boy's dim figure crossing the field, and with a shout ran over to him.

"Do you want to earn something guarding my

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airplane?" he asked the lad, who had stopped to stare at him. "Can I trust you to let no one come near it?"

"*Ja, ja, Herr Officer,*" consented the young German eagerly. "No one would dare when I tell them you are coming back."

The bargain was soon struck and Bob, skirting the silent hamlet, hurried at his best speed down the hill toward the landing-stage. It was deserted when he came in sight of it. Darkness had fallen and the moon was shining. He saw the barge moored in the shadow of the birches.

"How do they expect to get away?" he wondered. Then, with a start, he saw the outline of a motor-boat below the landing-stage, and a man sitting in it.

Bob drew his revolver, stole on to the shaky planks of the stage and called out a challenge in German. The motor-boat's occupant stood up uncertainly, bareheaded in the moonlight, and leaning toward Bob with one hand on the landing-stage, said doubtfully:

"I don't speak German, sir. Ain't there some mistake?"

"Seems to be," said Bob, smiling in spite of himself. "Who are you, anyway? Whose boat is this?"

"It's a government boat, sir. I'm the engineer.

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I brought Captain Eaton over from Coblenz, and ——”

“You did? Where did he go?”

“He went up the hill there, toward that light you see near the top. They were after some ——”

“Who’s this?” said Bob suddenly. As he spoke he sprang into the motor-boat beside Rogers and crouched low, pulling the soldier down with him. A second motor-boat had glided into view, coming down the river, and, slowing speed as it turned toward the shore, it made for the bank with engine softly purring.

It drew near the landing-stage. Bob peered over the gunwale, ready to challenge if it came closer. But the man at the wheel, leaning forward to look out into the moonlit darkness, no sooner caught sight of the other boat than he swung sharply inshore below the hamlet, a dozen yards from where Bob awaited him.

Bob now saw that the unknown craft held two men and that they were excitedly conferring together, while the unmoored boat tossed idly on the rippling water. Then the steersman swung the boat’s nose around again.

“Start your engine!” cried Bob to Rogers, who silently obeyed. It was plain that the stranger, at this unexpected intrusion, was going to run away without landing. Bob seized the search-light be-

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side the wheel, flashed it over the other boat's bows, and saw von Eckhardt, still disputing hotly with a scared-looking man whom Bob recognized as Franz' companion, and who was turning the wheel rapidly from side to side ineffectually trying to get the boat into the stream.

"Full speed ahead!" Bob ordered. "Cut that boat off before it gets a start. I'll do the rest."

Rogers pushed off from the dock and ran his boat quickly up-stream to where the other still made little headway amid the steersman's frantic shiftings of the wheel.

"Now full speed astern, and hold her here a moment," said Bob.

Almost alongside the other boat, which now began to gain momentum enough to slip away, Bob drew his revolver and, firing two shots before her bows, called out, "Herr von Eckhardt, I am Captain Gordon. Please put inshore. I wish to speak with you."

Von Eckhardt's body shook with rage, and his heavy lifted hand came down on the steersman's head in a cruel blow. "*Dum Kopf!* Stupid dolt that thou art!" he cried, shaking his fist in the man's face. "If Karl had been here!"

The words came clearly over the strip of water. At Karl's name Bob started, the reason for Eliza-

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beth's mysterious conduct all at once vaguely dawning on him.

"Please step on board this boat, Herr von Eckhardt," he directed. "Your man can run inshore to wait."

His words left no room for argument. Von Eckhardt saw the revolver gleaming in his hand, and turning his head, saw the search-lights of a French torpedo-boat steaming down the river. He attempted no defiance. As the two boats drifted alongside, Rogers holding them a foot apart, von Eckhardt sprang across and stepped down beside Bob, his face pale and mask-like in the moonlight, except for his eyes glowing with sombre fire.

"Of what am I accused, Herr Captain?" he flung at Bob.

"I cannot tell you just now," Bob answered. "But perhaps I can satisfy you when I have seen the others, up in the cottage there."

Rogers had moored the boat once more at the landing-stage. Bob saw von Eckhardt's eyes suddenly fixed on the loaded barge looming out of the shadows, though almost instantly he looked away.

"I'll trouble you to hand over your arms, Herr von Eckhardt," Bob said.

Von Eckhardt slowly unbuttoned his overcoat and drew out a revolver.

"This is all you have?" Bob asked, taking it.

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"Yes," said the other, flashing his arrogant glance at the young American.

"Engineer, take my revolver. It's the regulation sort. Guard this German until I come back. I am Captain Gordon."

"Yes, sir," said the soldier, taking the revolver. "Please sit down opposite me," he directed von Eckhardt, who silently complied.

Bob glanced at the German, then spoke aside to the soldier, "Don't take your eyes off him. He's a slippery customer. Shoot if he tries to escape."

Rogers nodded agreement. Without another thought, in his eagerness to rejoin Larry and have all made clear, Bob stepped ashore and ran up the hill toward the little house where, in another few moments, he and Lucy surprised each other.

Karl appeared dumbfounded at sight of Bob, and his remaining braggadocio left him. He was all timid willingness to please and could not obey orders quickly enough.

"Come, let's get them to the boat," proposed Larry. "We were just starting when you came, Bob."

"All right. What about the old cottager? What's to be done with him? Dick, I have a thousand things to ask and tell you," said Bob, slapping Major Harding's shoulder. "When did you get here, and how did Larry know ——"

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"That Elizabeth was to cross the river? It was Lucy's doing. I got to Coblenz early this morning. As for the old Boche," nodding toward the owner of the cottage, who stood staring fearfully from one officer to the other, "let's leave him alone. He's just a wretched tool in their hands."

"And they are tools in von Eckhardt's hands," said Bob. "It's hard to know who to blame."

"Come, Elizabeth," said Lucy, taking her old nurse's arm. "I'll go with you. Don't be afraid."

"Is that steersman of yours a reliable sort of fellow, Larry?" asked Bob. "I'd hate to have von Eckhardt give him the slip."

"Oh, Rogers is all right."

They had come out into the moonlight and begun to descend the slope, Karl and Franz guarded by Ed and Larry. Almost as Larry spoke a shot rang out from below the hill.

In the hush of alarm Bob gave a sudden cry. "Fool that I am! I forgot the other man, Karl's helper in von Eckhardt's boat! Come, Harding!"

He plunged down the steep path, Major Harding at his heels, and in five minutes reached the riverside.

Rogers and von Eckhardt were still in the motor-boat, but Rogers was leaning over the side, a smoking pistol in his hand. Von Eckhardt was shouting orders across a dozen feet of water to his

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own boat, which, navigated by the pilot's clumsy assistant, was getting under way, towing after it the loaded barge, unloosed from its moorings.

"Jump in, Dick! Hurry! We must turn back that boat!" cried Bob with mounting excitement.

He jumped in beside Rogers and von Eckhardt, followed by Major Harding. "Start her up! Get in front of that fellow and head him off!" Bob panted.

Rogers handed him the pistol and sprang to the engine. Von Eckhardt, stopping his frenzied directions, stood motionless, watching his boat, which had now got into the current and was making fair speed up-stream, the barge in tow.

Rogers pushed off and rapidly gave chase. The race was lost for the German boat from the beginning. Von Eckhardt sank down on the seat and sat staring at the floor.

While the boat overtook its quarry Rogers gave a hurried account of what had happened.

"You told me to shoot, sir, so when this fellow here began shouting out to his friend and telling him, as I made out by his gestures mostly, to come over and untie the barge and tow it off, I threatened to fire. But he defied me and said, 'Shoot away.' I couldn't just make up my mind to shoot him down like that, so instead I began firing at the

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other boat, hoping to cripple it. In the moonlight my shots went rather wild. I think I hit the other German. He cried out ——”

“Yes, looks as though you had,” said Major Harding, pointing to the German pilot, who, steering with one hand, held the other pressed against his right shoulder.

“Easy now,” said Bob to Rogers. “Cut across his bows. Von Eckhardt,”—he turned toward the German who sat with bent head in the boat’s stern —“tell your man to run inshore, will you? Or do you want us to shoot him?”

Von Eckhardt raised his head and in a dull, stifled voice called out the order. The German craft slowed and swung around, pointing downstream again, the barge slewing about in its wake. Ten minutes more and both motor-boats were back at the landing-stage below the hamlet, where Larry, Ed, Franz, Karl, Lucy and Elizabeth stood waiting.

As Major Harding stepped ashore he said, “Bob, I’ve talked this over with Eaton, but not with you. Are you on to these fellows? Do you know that von Eckhardt has been smuggling arms and munitions along the Rhine to the Bolsheviki in Germany and elsewhere? We’re not sure of the details yet, nor of how the stuff is carried, though Eaton thinks ——”

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"He thinks right," said Bob, glancing toward the barge. "Karl, bring one of those fagot-bundles—one of the real ones."

Karl sprang forward, once more the obedient servant, eager to conciliate the man who had got the best of him. He boarded the barge and in a moment returned, carrying a bundle of fagots which he laid carefully down on the landing-stage. Larry turned the motor-boat's search-light on the bundle as Karl cut the fastenings. The wood fell apart, revealing a neat package of machine gun belts, wrapped in water-proofed cloth.

Karl looked up at Bob, almost as triumphantly as though he himself had disclosed the conspiracy. Franz stood sullenly apart. The Americans' eyes were turned on von Eckhardt, who still sat motionless, not having once raised his head.

Hot with anger and lingering amazement, Larry addressed the German in scornful questioning, "Why, von Eckhardt, I thought you despised the Spartacan rebels and their Bolshevik friends. Why should you wish to help them? I thought you were a Prussian of the old régime!"

The German stood up in the boat, folded his arms and answered with frozen calm: "You are right, Captain. I despise the Spartacan rebels. But they would have been my tool with which to overthrow the Republican government—already

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tottering. I sought to bring back Imperial Germany—vain hope!”

“Yes, vain enough,” said Major Harding. He spoke almost solemnly. “Von Eckhardt, your schemes will be unknown to history, and yet I wonder if peace has not been saved by their discovery.”

Lucy listened, stirred with awe and astonishment. Knowing no more of von Eckhardt's plots than the part in which Franz had shared, she could not yet understand Major Harding's earnestness. Elizabeth, sunk in uncomprehending misery, was crying softly by her side. Between sobs she whispered:

“Miss Lucy, what will they do to Karl? Oh, better I never asked him to come here!”

The little German woman still thought that her husband had come on purpose to see her.

“I must go for my airplane,” said Bob. “Karl can run von Eckhardt's boat to Coblenz and tow the barge.” In answer to a doubtful look from Larry he added reassuringly, “Oh, Karl is as trustworthy now as you or I. Don't you see, he's with us again? He's always on the winning side.”

Larry was tying up the wounded shoulder of the German whom Rogers had shot. Lucy bent to help him and, in the man's broad head and heavy, stooping figure, recognized the lodge-keeper called Ludwig, whom she and Michelle had seen at mid-

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night in the forest. She saw the man look up to cast a glance of bitter hatred at von Eckhardt.

"We won't have much trouble getting the truth out of this chap," said Larry with a chuckle. "Doesn't seem fond of his noble master."

Lucy took opportunity to whisper, "Don't be hard on Elizabeth, Larry. Don't treat her like the rest."

Larry nodded. "Bob's gone already," he said, looking behind him. "Let's beat him to Coblenz."

CHAPTER XIII

ACROSS THE CHANNEL

AT General Gordon's that evening there was so much to be talked over that the general sent word to Badheim hospital that he would keep Bob and Lucy overnight. Larry and Major Harding were there, sharing the late supper that Lucy and Elizabeth prepared. Elizabeth was hard at work as ever, with only her pale face and anxious eyes to betray that she was other than her quiet, steady self. When her pleading, troubled glance encountered that of the Americans her eyelids dropped hurriedly, as though dreading the hard words and reproaches so far delayed.

But not even General Gordon himself spoke to her in another tone or treated her otherwise than before the afternoon's adventure, and, little by little, her hands ceased to tremble, her glance to avoid other eyes, and, as she worked on in humble sadness, she drew a low grateful sigh. Not one of those present but by their kind, natural behavior tried to show her that she was not held responsible

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for the conspiracy into which her misguided, affectionate heart had so nearly led her. Bob and Lucy spoke to her with all their old friendliness, ignoring in her presence what occupied all their thoughts, and unhappy Elizabeth warmed from her frightened aloofness, and found fresh hope and courage in their generosity.

When she had left them, and General Gordon, Lucy, Bob, Larry and Major Harding were gathered around a blazing fire, Major Harding tried to answer the questions that Lucy, most eager of the four, began to press upon him.

"There's a lot that I don't understand," she said. "I know that Herr Johann, I mean von Eckhardt, plotted with Franz to smuggle ammunition to the rebels. But could those few boat-loads do much harm?"

"Franz' little share in it, don't you see, Lucy, is only a tiny part of von Eckhardt's organization." Major Harding stared into the fire as he spoke, his voice still ringing with earnestness. "Von Eckhardt is a good organizer, and he knew that not much is needed to turn the tide in Germany to-day. But he made the mistake—like a true German—of thinking too poorly of his opponents. Because he is clever he took us for fools."

"How much did you know, Dick, when Bob wrote you?" asked General Gordon. "I blame

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myself, Bob, for not listening to you sooner, but I had such endless work on hand."

"We were suspicious, but no more," said Major Harding. "We wondered where the Spartacans got their stuff. The Berlin riots were spreading to other places. The leaflet Bob sent me was a big help."

"The one Lucy found in the forest," put in Bob.

"That told us where to look," Major Harding continued. "If you remember, it ran something like this:

Farmer So-and-so of such a place . . . 26.

"There was a whole list of them. We discovered, by bribing or threatening some of the fellows named in the list, that the numbers stood for cart or boat loads of arms or munitions shipped within the month. By those numbers it was plain that the plot had already grown rather sizable."

"The lodge in the forest was where he met his agents and gave his orders," said Bob. "Who is von Eckhardt, anyway?"

"He is the real leader of the movement, though not the only one. He stayed around here to engineer the most dangerous part of the program. In spite of the American occupation he had to work where the stuff was hidden."

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"And he might very well have pulled it off, if we hadn't had so much spare time to watch him," remarked Bob.

"And if you hadn't had your theories," said Larry.

"Von Eckhardt was a colonel of artillery during the war," went on Major Harding. "He has a record for harsh pride, but also for courage. He saw his hopes crushed with the Kaiser's fall, and welcomed a rebellion that would open the way for a counter-revolution. He was too absorbed in that idea to foresee the appalling results of turning Bolshevism loose in Germany."

"I wonder why he picked out such a stupid dolt as Franz. It was he who gave away the show," said Larry.

"Because Franz had been his servant and he knew he would obey," said Lucy. "Franz had to leave Alsace and was so poor he had no choice."

"That's it," Bob nodded. "Trudchen told me the same thing. Franz isn't bold. He would never have chosen to enter on such a risky business."

"I'm so sorry for the children," said Lucy sadly. "What can Trudchen do now? I don't think they got much money from Herr Johann. They seem awfully poor."

"No, I dare say it was mostly promises," said

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Bob. "He had to give Karl money, though, to keep him faithful. He made a pilot of him and used him to keep track of things along the Rhine. Karl told me something of it when I talked with him an hour ago."

"And poor Elizabeth was to be his excuse for coming here," said Lucy.

"Yes, Elizabeth could always explain that he had come here to see her, and they knew that Father and I would believe her."

"But I wonder how Franz went about it. He can't act a part, and Elizabeth is sharp enough," reflected Larry.

"Von Eckhardt put him up to it, of course. And I suppose Elizabeth was so pleased at the idea of seeing Karl and making up the quarrel that she was blind to the rest."

Lucy's eyes flashed with indignation. "And he pretended to be friendly. Oh, now I hope she sees what he's worth!"

"Throw some wood on the fire, Bob," said General Gordon, relighting his pipe. "How long are you going to be with us, Dick?"

"Not long, sir. I must get away as soon as I can."

"I know someone else who ought to get away from here," remarked the general, glancing at his daughter, who sat with hands clasped behind her

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head, her cheeks still pink from the day's excitement, her fair hair ruffled where the firelight shone upon it.

"I, Father? What do you mean?" Lucy asked surprised.

"I mean that I want you to spend at least a few weeks this spring with the Leslies in England. Bob ought to go, too. You both need a change, and in Surrey you'll find the quiet that seems to elude you this side of the Channel. Your mother will soon be here to look after me. I'm going to get you both off."

"Hooray!" exclaimed Larry, instantly warming to the idea. "You're right, General, the sooner they get off, the better. Do them lots of good. I go to England myself next month."

"Disinterested advice, Eaton," said Major Harding, laughing.

"Well, it would be no end of fun being there together," declared Larry undisturbed. "And Alan Leslie invited me to his house—nice chap, Alan."

"If I could persuade Michelle to go, too," murmured Lucy thoughtfully.

"Go to bed, daughter," said General Gordon, seeing Lucy's eyelids droop before the dancing flames. "And dream of a trip to England, not of Bolshies and German sly-boots."

"It's Franz' children I've got to worry about

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now," said Lucy, getting up. "Major Dick, it's nice to see you," she added, shaking hands with her old friend. "I didn't have time to tell you so this afternoon."

"I'm glad to hear it now," said Major Harding, smiling. When Lucy had gone out he added thoughtfully, "General, do you know, they don't make many like that girl of yours?"

"Not two in the world," said Larry to the fire.

Franz was held in Coblenz for trial, along with Karl and von Eckhardt, and Lucy took her first chance, after returning to the hospital, to visit the cottage in the clearing. Michelle went with her, and there was so much to talk about that they were half an hour sauntering through the forest before they reached the spring.

Michelle listened to Lucy in silence, her eyes shining, her cheeks flushing red. "*Oh, le vilain Boche!*" she cried at last, and her voice shook with the ardor of her feelings as she pressed her hands together, vainly trying to control her excitement. "It seems not true, Lucy, that Herr Johann, von Eckhardt—whatever he is called—should have sought to destroy his own country!"

"He didn't think of it that way," said Lucy, meditatively. "He was so crazy to restore the old government that a Bolshevik revolution seemed to

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him as good a way as any. That is what Bob and Major Harding told me. When the Bolsheviki began to be dangerous von Eckhardt and his friends planned to tell everyone that to save the country they must call back von Hindenberg, Ludendorf and the rest. It might have worked."

"Yes, it might. We might have had more war." Michelle was still hot and trembling. Once more Lucy realized what the past four years had meant to her, and how horrible beyond words was the thought that the war might be prolonged.

"Don't think about it, Michelle—there's no danger now," she said with happy confidence.

Lucy herself, now the plot was unearthed and brought to nothing, felt no more than a moderate resentment against von Eckhardt and his associates. They were crushed and the danger past. Like Alan, she did not want even to think of Germans or Bolsheviki. In her overwhelming relief a great peace entered her soul, and for the first time she yielded to all the quiet charm of the forest, ready, as Larry was, to take exile cheerfully and look ahead to better things.

"Let's not bother about it, Michelle, now it's over," she urged, putting one arm about her friend's shoulders and giving her a quick hug. "It's only Trudchen and the children we have to think of."

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"I know, of course," agreed Michelle, but her vivid imagination still held the frightened shadows in her eyes. "It is that I saw it again, Lucy, the war once more begun! Armand in the worst danger—*Maman* and I driven from home—the Germans coming on and on and France nearly beaten. Oh, Lucy, those are things that even with many years I never can forget!"

Lucy was silent, but as she watched Michelle's flaming cheeks and darkened eyes she thought, "I'll write Cousin Janet to-day. Michelle must go with me to England." At last she said, "Suppose you go back to the hospital now, Michelle, and let me talk to Franz' wife. Why should you see another Boche if you can help it?"

Michelle had conquered her feelings with her usual self-control, and now she smiled at Lucy's proposal.

"I do not mind going with you, Lucy," she protested. "I do not hate Adelheid and the little ones. It would be a hard heart that could blame them."

"But I thought perhaps you'd rather not see them."

"Not at all. I am sorry for them and the poor Trudchen. They are *pauvres malheureux*."

"All right then, here we are," said Lucy as they came out into the clearing. "Bob sent Trudchen

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word about Franz. I'm glad we shan't have to tell her that."

As they crossed the snowy clearing Adelheid appeared at the cottage door and ran to meet them. She had not even stopped to put on a shawl and her thin little body shivered as she came up, crying:

"*Ach, Fräulein*, and you, French young lady, we are very sad here! I am glad to see you! Come and talk to the *Mamachen*—she only cries and cries."

"Hurry, Adelheid, we'll run," said Lucy, catching the child's hand. "You'll freeze."

"I forgot the cold," said Adelheid, with a serious, preoccupied air that was strange enough for seven years old. "I was so afraid you would not come!" Her flaxen hair was loosed from its braids and tossed about in the cold wind. Her cheeks were pale and her frightened blue eyes wet with tears. "We don't know what will happen to Papachen," she sobbed, clinging to Lucy's hand.

Lucy lifted the pathetic little figure in her arms. "Don't think of it, he'll be all right. He will come back to you," she promised, and, uncertain as she was of Franz' punishment, she spoke with confidence enough to make the little girl look up at her with new hope, a smile dawning on her lips.

Inside the cottage Trudchen was shuffling about on listless household errands, her eyes swollen

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from crying, her face white with fear. The two little boys crouched together in a corner, trying to play, but stopping every moment to stare at their mother with unhappy, wondering eyes.

At sight of Lucy, Trudchen gave a cry of welcome. In her miserable loneliness even the glimpse of a friendly face meant help and comfort. But she came forward timidly, wiping her hands on her faded apron, her lips hesitating over the words she longed to speak, and tears again overflowing her eyes.

“Franz — dear Fräulein — where is he?” she faltered. She drew Lucy near the fire and made her sit down on a stool by the hearth. Mechanically she curtsied to Michelle, pulled another stool forward, then stood eagerly awaiting Lucy’s reply, the old apron twisted between her restless hands.

Lucy cast about for an answer, the two little boys crowding against her, looking up into her face as though in search of some cheerfulness after the gloom of the cottage. Michelle had drawn Adelheid to her and was braiding the child’s tangled hair and warming her in the blaze of the pine logs.

“Franz is in Coblenz, Trudchen,” Lucy said slowly. “He will have to stay a prisoner for a while. But they will let him come back to you. And we’ll help you. The children shan’t want for anything.”

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“Then they know all, Fräulein? It was your brother found it out! Oh, believe me, I did all a woman could to keep Franz from taking this cottage and consenting to guard its wicked secret! I don’t understand it all, for Franz would never explain, but I know that, while the war lasted, Herr von Eckhardt threatened Franz with death if he did not remain here ——”

“Was he here all during the war?” asked Lucy.

“Oh, no, Fräulein. But last summer, when we Germans saw the war was lost, Herr von Eckhardt sent Franz from the army to keep guard over this place. And with the armistice he promised comfort and riches for us all if Franz was faithful. I always hated him! But Franz would not listen ——”

Trudchen buried her face in her hands and wept. Adelheid sprang from Michelle and ran to her. Watching the child cling in silent misery to her mother’s skirts, Lucy repeated unhesitatingly:

“Don’t worry, Trudchen. We are going to help you.”

And such was her confidence that a ray of hope lighted the German woman’s anxious face. “If you would, kind Fräulein—we have nothing ——” she stammered.

But once in the clearing again, on the way home,

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Michelle, practical in all her kindness, exclaimed dubiously, "How could you promise help so easily, Lucy? Money is what she needs, and can we give it to her? Once I could have done so, but now, *Maman* and I are almost as poor as she."

Lucy was silent a moment. "I know. It's going to be hard," she admitted. "But since I've promised"—her voice grew confident again—"I'm going to keep my promise. I'll get the money somehow, Michelle. Father can't give very much, but he'll give some. Trudchen doesn't need such a great deal to live, when dollars can be turned into marks."

And Lucy kept her word. She begged a "starter" from General Gordon, and did not find it hard to get contributions from Larry, Major Harding, Bob, Armand, and not a few of the hospital staff and convalescents who knew Friedrich, Wilhelm and Adelheid. In three days she had the satisfaction of carrying the little sum to Trudchen and of knowing that she and the children would not lack food or clothing during Franz' imprisonment.

"Lucy, I thought you would never succeed. I thought you were making foolish promises," Michelle told her, the day they took Trudchen the money. She looked at her friend with real admiration. "You are wonderful—you Americans. It

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seems almost as though you can do whatever you wish!"

Lucy laughed, but she exclaimed, seizing the opportunity Michelle's words offered, "Then let me do something now that I've been wishing for the last six weeks! Let me persuade you to come with me to England."

"Oh, Lucy, if I could!" Michelle's voice, filled with regret, yet held a quick warmth as though her young heart thrilled only at thought of finding again the careless pleasure lost to her so many years.

"If you could? Why can't you? My Cousin Janet wants you to come. She is going to write your mother. And Janet and Alan have written begging me to urge you. It will do you more good than you can guess. And I want you so much. Oh, Michelle, don't refuse!"

"But to leave *Maman* and Armand? To spend so great a sum of our little money?"

"It's not so much—just across the Channel. And your mother wants you to go. I've talked with her. She has your brother now, so she's not alone. It was he who said that you must go and that he would gladly take your place with her a little while."

"When shall you sail? If I *could* go!" This time, in spite of her doubtful words, Michelle's

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voice was eager with something like joyful anticipation.

Lucy looked at her in delighted surprise. At that moment Michelle's spirit thrust aside the spectre of the long years of suffering and captivity. Her deep blue eyes shone with unclouded brightness and her lips parted in a radiant happy smile. With a look borrowed from the untroubled childhood out of which she had been so harshly roused she cried, clasping her hands together:

"Then I can go! You think I may, Lucy? Oh, how I should love it! To forget the war, to go far away from it!" Suddenly her face clouded and, as quickly as it had brightened, became serious, calm and thoughtful as every day. "But I must not think about it until I know that it is true. Perhaps I must not take the money."

"Think about it all you like," said Lucy, slipping her arm through Michelle's with quick sympathy. "I tell you, you're going."

Armand was as anxious that his sister should have the change for which she silently longed, and, to Lucy's delight, he let no obstacle stand in the way. Larry had left for England a few days after Franz' and Herr Johann's arrest, and his letters to Bob and Lucy were filled with inducements to his friends to hasten their trip to England.

"It's not a bit cold here now," he wrote early in

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April. "It's simply perfect. Warm enough for Bob, even. Don't you know what some fellow wrote about 'Oh, to be in England, now that April's there'? Do hurry."

Mrs. Gordon arrived in Coblenz the third week in April. Ten days later, Bob, Lucy and Michelle, together with one of Mrs. Gordon's fellow-workers, sailed from Calais on a fine spring morning.

Michelle had a hard struggle with her feelings at the moment of parting. She had no fear for her mother in Armand's care, but the thought of leaving France, with promise of peace behind her and of pleasure ahead, seemed so much happiness that it was more like grief in its intensity. Somehow she felt, as the boat left the French coast and steamed over the sunlit ocean, that never until that moment had she realized that the war's dreadful ordeal was endured and ended, and that a new life—all her life—lay ahead.

She did not need to explain this to Lucy, who understood her silence well enough, filled with thoughts of her own not in reality so very different. With France and Germany left behind, she seemed also to have cast off a part of her—a thoughtful, prudent, anxious part—painfully acquired since 1917, and to become again light-hearted.

Yet after half an hour's silent reflection she found no other way to express herself, as she

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turned to Bob with a deep light in her hazel eyes, than to say, "Bob—the war is over!"

Bob looked at her, smiling, something happy about his face, too, as he answered idly, "Really? Full of news, aren't you?"

"Oh, Bob, don't laugh," Lucy said, watching the shining sea, and the white clouds softly piled above the horizon. "I don't think Michelle or I ever really believed it until now."

CHAPTER XIV.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

AMERICA still remained distant and longed for, yet, to Lucy, England held a little of the spell of peace and homeland when Janet and Alan Leslie welcomed her back to Highland House.

She had not felt it so at Dover, nor in London's crowded streets, where uniforms were common as before the armistice and a sort of uneasy restlessness persisted, as though these months before the opening of the Conference did not yet inspire full confidence that peace had come. But once in Surrey, among the glories of an English country springtime, Lucy felt her heart almost overflow with grateful happiness, and she could hardly talk to Janet at all to tell her how glad she was to be back with her at last.

Half of Lucy's happiness was to watch Michelle, who seemed to change hourly with Europe left behind. The girl Lucy presented to Janet was hardly the same Michelle who through four long years had defied the Germans to wear out her heroic hope and courage. She was almost a child

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again—a child laughing with delight at the beauties of green leaves and apple orchards, and at seeing the young, happy faces of Lucy's cousins according her such generous, friendly welcome.

Alan tried to put all his enthusiasm into words, and only managed to make everyone laugh at his bursts of inquiry, exclamation and light-hearted cordiality.

“Spoof me all you like,” he offered, in too high spirits to be easily dashed. “Here I’ve been waiting ages, wondering if you were really coming to tell me all the news of dear old Badheim——”

“Alan!” Janet protested.

“Well, I had rather larks there, you know. Can’t help liking the place. I want to hear it all from beginning to end—all about Franz and Herr Johann—— I’m most awfully glad you came, Miss Michelle,” he broke off to say. “I was jolly afraid you’d go back on us.”

“*Will* you let me speak, Alan?” Janet demanded. “Lucy, when are your father and mother coming?”

“Next week. Father thinks he can manage to get a few days’ leave.”

“Arthur’s here, Lucy,” put in Alan.

“And Archibald Beattie,” Janet added.

“Captain Beattie? Oh, I will be glad to see him!” cried Lucy.

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“And wait till you ——”

“Sh-h! Alan. I want to surprise her,” said Janet quickly. “There’s someone at the house to see you, Lucy—three people, in fact ——”

“Who’s telling now?” cried Alan.

“Cousin Henry?” asked Lucy eagerly.

“Yes,” said Janet, “but not alone. Just wait. Oh, we’re going to have fun, Lucy, when we’re all together! What we haven’t planned! No more hoeing corn at daybreak. Do you remember?”

“Don’t I!” said Lucy with a faint, happy sigh. “How long ago was it, anyway?”

This conversation took place on the way from the station to Highland House. Alan drove his fast greys along the country lanes at their best pace, and, sniffing the fresh sunny air, they devoured the five miles before them and in half an hour trotted up the long avenue of beeches to the great old country-house which Lucy had left in such miserable uncertainty a year before.

The doors at the head of the wide, shallow stone steps were open, and, as Alan drew rein and a stable boy ran to the horses’ bridles, Mrs. Leslie and her husband came out to meet their guests.

Colonel Leslie’s left sleeve hung empty, but he was erect as ever, his face as full of vigor and kindness. Behind him came Mr. Henry Leslie, a hand on the shoulder of each of his two companions, at

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sight of whom Lucy's greetings to the others were struck dumb on her lips.

"Marian! And *William!*" she cried, and, unable to speak another syllable, she sprang down to the steps and in an instant had her little brother in her arms.

Marian Leslie flung her arms about her neck as Lucy hugged William close to her, Lucy stopping only to hold William off from her far enough to see the changes that two years had brought the chubby five-year-old she had left behind her in America.

"Bigger, aren't I, Lucy?" he asked, delighted. "But, gee, you're bigger, too."

Lucy wanted to cry, and to keep from doing it she caught tight hold of Marian's hand and turned to present her to Michelle. "And Cousin Janet! Cousin Arthur! Oh, I haven't spoken to you even!" she cried, the joyful surprise almost too much for her. "Marian, how glad I am to see you! You've grown up, you know."

"So have you," said Marian, smiling her frank, gay smile, as she shook Michelle's hand. "Lucy, I *almost* wouldn't have known you."

"Well, I'd have known you in China," declared Lucy, looking at Marian's golden hair, now pinned up on her head, and at the unchanged delicate loveliness of rose-leaf skin and soft blue eyes. "Oh,

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Cousin Henry, how often Bob and I have talked of her! Are you truly well now?" she asked Marian, though the question was hardly needed.

"She is," Mr. Leslie answered, his voice filled with deep satisfaction. "She's as strong and well as anybody, and I'll never forget who made her so."

Lucy flushed at this reminder of the kind experiment she had undertaken so long ago, and, glad of a diversion, she glanced quickly up as Mrs. Leslie said:

"Here's Arthur, Lucy, and Captain Eaton will be here soon."

"I can't believe it's all true," said Lucy, shaking Arthur Leslie's hand. "Arthur, I've never seen you out of uniform before."

"Got out just last week," said Major Leslie, smiling at her. "How did you like the surprise, Lucy? Now we've only to assemble Beattie, Eaton, and your father and mother to have nothing more to wish for."

"Meanwhile let us go indoors and make our guests comfortable," proposed Mrs. Leslie. "Tea will be ready presently."

"You don't look much like an invalid, Bob," said Arthur, one hand on his cousin's shoulder. "We'll see how your appetite is."

"We still have to be sparing with the butter," laughed Janet. "But you can have all the muffins

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you want, Lucy. And I think Michelle ought to have the lion's share."

Shyness had fallen on Michelle as these greetings took place, but the warm friendliness shown her, and Alan's never-failing light-hearted companionship soon made her forget her strangeness.

Tea-time was a lovely hour at Highland House, Lucy had always thought, and this afternoon more so than ever. The table was spread on the tree-dotted lawn below the long windows of the dining-room. Basket chairs with chintz cushions invited everyone to comfort and peaceful enjoyment, and through the young leaves of the oaks the late sunbeams filtered, bright without warmth, as the breeze of early evening stirred.

Lucy said to Janet, "How often I've thought of you all sitting here! But it wasn't all of you then! How long have you been home together?"

"Arthur got home after Alan, only two weeks ago. I'm not used to it yet."

"Then sit down and make the most of it," suggested Captain Beattie, who had walked over from his home ten miles away, arriving with a tremendous appetite, and a warm welcome for the travellers.

By way of reply Janet began pouring the tea. Lucy smiled at him but forgot to answer. She had not yet got used to Captain Beattie in civilian's

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clothes. For the moment he was almost another person. This jolly, care-free, leisurely young Englishman in his country tweeds was not the prisoner of Château-Plessis, weary, starving and defiant, nor the devoted soldier of the war's last glorious effort. He was the peace-time Englishman, taking things coolly, with easy calm. His clear eyes guessed Lucy's thoughts, for he said, smiling at her:

"I'm out of my war stride, Lucy. Quite a tame dog now. I spend my days roaming the woods and finding out what's become of our place while I was Boche-hunting and Dad was in the War Office. I think we've collected enough pheasant for a million bags."

"That's what I've heard the Britishers looking forward to ever since the armistice," said Bob. "Going home to shoot. It's a national mania."

"You have some of your own," declared Captain Beattie. "Hello, here's Eaton."

Larry came around the house with Alan and Michelle, and swung his cap around his head at sight of Bob and Lucy.

"You're here at last! How *are* you? Good-afternoon, Mrs. Leslie. Thank you for asking me. Hello, Beattie—everyone." He bowed to Arthur and Marian, and caught William Gordon's hands to pull him from the arm of Lucy's chair. "The

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last member of the Gordon family," he exclaimed, looking down at the little boy, who returned his gaze with bright fearless eyes. "Another credit and I shouldn't wonder."

Bob was sitting beside Marian. These two, always unaccountably friends, even in Marian's invalid days, had renewed their comradeship with great ease after two years' separation. Something in Marian's untroubled happy-hearted nature appealed to Bob's restless soul. Even when she was a little girl he had liked to talk with her, secretly amused to watch her twist the curls of her golden hair about delicate lazy fingers, her fresh, pretty frocks never mussed or soiled at an age when Lucy was torn and dishevelled too often for belief.

For Marian had always had something honest and generous about her, behind her spoiled self-indulgence, something that had made her and Lucy friends from the beginning, in spite of the difference between them. Marian had never been vain of her beauty, and now, with her golden hair tucked up, almost a young lady, with the childish roundness gone from her pretty face, she was unaffected and good-tempered as ever.

"When are you coming home, Bob?" was her first question. "For months I've been planning what we'll do when you and Lucy come to Long Island. Father will let me do anything in

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the world to welcome you home. Do make it soon!"

"Ask President Wilson," said Bob, smiling. "When will peace be signed?"

"I wish Lucy's friend Michelle could come, too," Marian added softly. "I like her, Bob! And really I don't know why I do, for she makes me feel a silly, worthless good-for-nothing."

"Better get over that, Marian," said Bob laughing. "Never knew you to be so humble before."

"I mean it," said Marian, still serious. "The war's done one good thing for me, anyway. I don't think I could ever be conceited now."

Marian had looked at Michelle as she spoke, and, meeting her eyes, smiled at her. Michelle had lost her shyness almost at once, for it could not linger in such a friendly company. Those who were strangers to her, at first welcoming the little foreigner for kindness' sake and because she was Lucy's friend, within an hour had begun to like Michelle for herself. Her lovely face, lighted by the deep blue eyes which still held something in their depths of suffering bravely borne, won instant sympathy. And there was a kind of joyous abandon in her gayety, of simple sweetness in her words. She thought nothing of herself, lost in delight at watching and listening to everything around her.

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"Isn't she top-hole?" Alan whispered to Lucy. Unbounded in his likes as in his dislikes, he was overflowing with pleasure at Lucy's and Michelle's arrival. "She's such a pal, you know, your little Frenchie. There's something no end nice and natural about her."

"You don't half know her—she's nicer all the time," declared Lucy, proud that her friend was so warmly welcomed in the Leslie family—as a rule not too easy to please. "She's seen nothing but awful things since the war began. She needs to have a good time."

"Let's see what we can do," said Alan.

Larry sat on Lucy's other side. Munching a muffin he looked up into the sunset clouds with peaceful content. A grasshopper lighted on his khaki sleeve. He flicked it off gently.

"This is some day, Lucy, some day," he murmured. "Have a muffin?" he suggested, about to help himself to another. "I seem to have got awfully hungry since you all arrived."

"Put it on us, if you like, Larry," said Bob. "Seeing you has certainly made me ravenous."

"Go right ahead," urged hospitable Janet. "They're bringing out more toast now."

"Marian made quite a hole in that last plateful," said Bob. "Would you believe it, Lucy?"

"Oh, it's wonderful here," said Lucy suddenly.

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But with lingering uncertainty she added, almost afraid to be too happy, "I wish peace were here, though, Larry. I don't feel sure of things."

Captain Beattie overheard her and stopped describing a cricket field to William to exclaim, "Don't say that, Lucy! Why, it's a perfect time! Plenty of troubles will come with peace—I see them looming now. This is a sort of blessed intermission. We've finished the first act and needn't yet begin the second."

"More tea, Archie?" asked Alan. "You, Bob?" To Bob he added, "I haven't half heard yet about Franz and Herr Johann. Got to hear it all, you know. I wish I'd been in at the killing. To think you were right about the Bolshies all the time, Bob, and I wouldn't listen. I'm nothing but a silly ass."

There was no end to the talk that went on around the tea-table. Twilight began to fall softly, and still everyone lingered in the warm summer air, while bees and beetles flitted by on their way home and one star twinkled from among the last sunset gleams.

Arthur Leslie asked Bob about his future in the Flying Corps. "Shall you stick to it, Bob, now you've gone so far? Or do you think there's little place for flying in time of peace?"

Bob in his earnestness leaned forward to answer,

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"How could I think that, Arthur? You don't think it either, nor your War Office, which is planning the greatest air force in the world. If our government would do as much! Why, flying has hardly started! It's an art of peace as much as of war. I could talk hours about it. Larry, you won't give it up?"

"No, I don't think I shall," Larry said thoughtfully. "Not for a while, at least. Putting national defense out of the question, Leslie,"—he spoke as eagerly as Bob—"think of the commerce of the future—think of forest fires discovered and fought from the air; you don't know what that means in America! and explorations made without tracking through the wilderness. It's a new world open. We'll explore it together, Bob."

"Poor Jourdin," Bob said, half under his breath. "How he could fly! I wish he might have lived to see the victory."

In another week General and Mrs. Gordon arrived from Coblenz, and the Leslie and Gordon families indulged in unrestrained rejoicing. The entertainments planned by Janet and Alan began to unfold, welcome enough, though Lucy thought nothing could much improve on the lovely rides and country saunterings of every day. Larry took all the time he could spare—and more than he could

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—from his studies. Again and again he and Lucy, Bob, Michelle, Alan, Janet and Marian walked miles along the country roads and through the summer woodland to lunch at some wayside inn, on eggs and buttered scones, strawberry jam and clotted cream that tasted better than anything in the world with the scent of flowering clover and ripening fruit around them.

At last came the night of the dance postponed until General and Mrs. Gordon's arrival. Bob practiced dancing a little with Lucy and Marian beforehand, to make sure his stiff leg would still do its duty, and Alan taught Michelle the one-step with triumphant success.

The night of the dance was so warm that the whole house was thrown open and from inside one looked out on gardens and lawns stretching to woodland, bright as day beneath the moonlight-flooded heavens.

Lucy, Michelle, Janet and Marian began dressing each in her own room, but at the end of half an hour they had gathered in Lucy's room and, under pretense of helping one another, were doing more talking than anything else. Janet, naturally prompt and ready long before the rest, sat on Lucy's bed and surveyed the three before her—Lucy first, the favorite in her loyal heart.

Lucy had not the beauty of either Michelle or

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Marian. She had not Marian's golden curls and porcelain skin, nor Michelle's deep blue eyes and fine features. But there was something about her face that held Janet's thoughtful gaze. "I love to look at Lucy's face," the English girl told herself.

Lucy had grown up in two years. Her childhood had vanished, though the frank unconsciousness of look and manner lingered. Her corn-colored hair—always so hard to keep in order—was brushed back and pinned above her neck, her hazel eyes shone with the clear brightness of the merry, generous soul within. Her cheeks were fuller now, after two weeks of English country life, and a warm color glowed beneath their tan. Her slight figure was filled with life and quickness, the awkwardness of her little girlhood past. The hard lessons learned overseas had done her no harm: she looked the world full in the face, hopefully, confidently, expecting the kindness and affection she gave so prodigally.

Janet, still watching her, thought to herself, "I know what Larry Eaton meant when he said Lucy was such good company. She's good company for bad days or for good—to laugh with you or to help you along. You could count on her every time."

"What's the matter with me, Janet?" asked

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Lucy anxiously, catching her cousin's eyes fixed upon her. "Is my dress wrong?"

"Not a bit—it's lovely," said Janet, rising with a jump as the musicians began tuning up below. "I must go down to Mother. It's half-past eight. People will begin to come."

The others followed and, down-stairs in the wide hall, beside one of the windows opening on the park, Michelle and Lucy paused by common consent and looked silently out on the moonlit loveliness. In the drawing-room the violins began to play, but softly, as though to lead on the gayety scarcely yet begun. Guests were filling the big house, and behind Lucy and Michelle Bob and Alan came quickly up.

"Here you are," said Alan. "Come out and show yourselves. Lucy, Eaton and Archie are asking for you."

But Bob had already caught Lucy's arm, saying, "Let's have the first dance together."

The violins burst into life, and brother and sister swung out on to the floor, then through the long open windows, and danced on the stone terrace in the moonlight, their silence more understanding, just then, than any words.

At last Bob said, "Aren't you glad we're here, Captain? I think I'm almost happy."

Lucy knew what he meant without a moment's

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hesitation. Even in the Gordon family's safe reunion there was something that Bob and Lucy could not forget. They were on friendly soil, and their hearts were warm to the friends around them, but they longed for America. Their thoughts were so much the same that Lucy's words seemed an answer to Bob's as she said:

"When we're all back home, Bob! Can you help thinking of it? I go to sleep at night pretending we're on a ship that's just slipping in past Sandy Hook, and I feel like saying over and over to myself, 'This is my own, my native land!'"

"Oh, Lucy!" called Larry's voice.

"Here she is," Bob answered. "And about to make me homesick."

"Funny thing," said Larry, coming up. "I feel the same way to-night, though it's so lovely here."

"We're a nice lot of people to entertain," said Bob laughing. As he let Lucy go he gave her a gentle hug which said, "Never mind. We've plenty to rejoice in."

Lucy knew that, too, and smiled at him. The music stopped and Bob went in search of Marian. Lucy and Larry wandered down the terrace steps and into the park, led on by the beautiful outdoors. And once away from the lighted house, Larry walking beside her in pleasant, friendly silence,



"HERE SHE IS," BOB ANSWERED

IN THE HOME SECTOR

Lucy's heart suddenly overflowed with the knowledge of peace and freedom and all the beauty glowing around her.

"Oh, Larry," she cried, looking down from the glorious sky to her friend's face, "how could I complain to Bob of anything? Could anyone want more than this to-night?"

"Hardly," said Larry, not asking her to speak more clearly, and he, too, seemed full of many thoughts that made speech difficult. He raised one hand with his old gesture to ruffle his hair, which showed ruddy in the moonlight, but, remembering not to do it, he smiled and his blue eyes turned from Lucy's to wander over the soft green of the woodland in front of them.

They reached the first scattered oaks. An owl flitted through the boughs and about their feet crickets chirped endlessly. The moonbeams sifted in checkered light through the young leaves upon the mossy ground which deadened their footsteps. Lucy was caught in the spell of beauty that never failed to hold her enchanted.

"It's not a bit like Germany, is it?" said Larry.

Lucy said softly, "It's like a *Midsummer Night's Dream*."

"Only we needn't wake up. Come back and dance, Lucy. We mustn't be serious to-night."

They came out on the lawns again and met the

CAPTAIN LUCY

dancers coming from the house in groups that broke the silence with talk and laughter. Captain Beattie joined them, then Bob, Marian, Michelle, Alan, Janet, and Arthur Leslie walking with General Gordon. Lucy caught her father's arm in hers as he laid a hand on her shoulder.

There was no more time for reverie that night, nor did Lucy any longer wish for it. Her vague regrets and longings were forgotten. There was nothing left in her heart but hope, courage and happiness. The great war was over, and life had but just begun.

The Stories in this Series are :

**CAPTAIN LUCY AND LIEUTENANT BOB
CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE
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